

SKIING HERITAGE

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Photo Treasure Found! • Legacy of Les Otten • Sugar Bowl's Silver Belt • Rear-Entry R.I.P.



SKIING HERITAGE



TO PRESERVE AND ADVANCE THE KNOWLEDGE
OF SKI HISTORY AND TO INCREASE PUBLIC
AWARENESS OF THE SPORT'S HERITAGE

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On The Cover A jumper launches in front of the world-famous Matterhorn in this 1933 poster promoting Zermatt, Switzerland—a lithograph by Swiss artist Pierre Kramer. The poster, courtesy of Vintage Ski World, is available in 19.5 x 27.5-inch format for \$19.95 at www.vintageskiworld.com, (800) 332-6323.

CONTENTS

Features

- | | |
|--|----|
| Found! A Photographic Treasure by John Fry | 6 |
| <i>Seventy years ago, Nicholas Morant captured the beauty of alpine skiing.</i> | |
| When Les Was More by Scott Andrews | 17 |
| <i>Success or failure? Visionary entrepreneur Les Otten leaves a legacy of both.</i> | |
| Chamonix Magnifique! by Doug Pfeiffer | 23 |
| <i>ISHA skiers join Penny Pitou for a week's ski adventure in France.</i> | |
| From Rock Carvings to Carving Skis by Olvind Kullberg | 34 |
| <i>Modern ski shapes may have been rooted in skis used 3,500 years ago.</i> | |
| Campgaw Mt.: Launching Missiles—and Skiers by Barry Warsch | 38 |
| <i>A Cold War nuclear deterrent is turned into a cold-weather skier incubator.</i> | |

Departments

- | | |
|--|----|
| Readers Respond | 3 |
| <i>Letters of reaction, brickbats, and opinion.</i> | |
| Snapshots in Time | 16 |
| <i>What was happening in skiing in 1927, 1937, 1957, 1967 and 1977.</i> | |
| Historic Lodging | 26 |
| <i>Jackson Hole's Alpenhof Lodge by John Fry</i> | |
| Where Are They Now | 29 |
| <i>Nelson Bennett by Tom Eastman</i> | |
| Classic Races | 31 |
| <i>Sugar Bowl's Silver Belt by Seth Masia</i> | |
| Classic Gear | 40 |
| <i>The Short, Controversial Life of the Rear-Entry Boot by Seth Masia</i> | |
| Remembering | 43 |
| <i>Dick Goetzman, Robert Nordhaus, Don Metivier, Dick Wilson, Jean Saubert</i> | |
| Skier's Bookshelf | 45 |
| <i>Reviews of Powder Pioneers; The Art of Skiing</i> | |
| Long Thongs | 48 |
| <i>Martins for Lunch: The Blissful Life of the Ski Writer, by Bill Wallace</i> | |

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A Bum's Life

Boy, did I love "Whither The Ski Bum," by Peter Shelton in the December 2006 issue!

I was a ski bum from 1958 to 1960 at Stowe, Vermont, earning my keep at The Round Hearth with a bed, two hearty "squares" a day, a season ski pass, and \$10 per week. We band of bums took pride in our jobs and loved every minute of our free ski time. We served breakfast, cleaned the dorms, served dinner, and were, more often than not, too tired to party into the night. We lived to ski tomorrow!

My last year at Stowe, I worked at the Toll House Sport Shop and lived at Harlow Hill with ski patrollers and ski instructors. I worked weekends and holidays, skiing mid-week, still qualifying as a regular ski bum.

Stowe ski-bumming led to an opportunity to work with an Austrian ski instructor's family in St. Anton in their pension-restaurant. I didn't get paid a salary but had a shared room, plenty to eat, a season pass, and sundry jobs to perpetuate my love of skiing. I was busy preserving my ski bum life, gaining a new family whom I still visit, and learning a new language which I still use when skiing the Tyrol today.

Thanks to SKIING HERITAGE for telling it like it truly was!

Patricia Faust Sayre
Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

Life After Ski

In "Tea Dance to Disco" (March 2007), I strongly doubt that, in the picture that shows skiers at the porch of the Appalachian Mountain Club Hut, the lady next to Charlie Proctor is U.S. team member Betty Woolsey. More likely, Betty is the woman seated below with blonde hair. I remem-

ber her as a blonde from Cornwall, Connecticut, where she and I spent our early years.

I've been skiing since the late 1920s and SKIING HERITAGE visits many of my early haunts and memories: skiing Stowe in the late 1930s before there was a chairlift on Mt. Mansfield, stepping off the ski train at Bousquet's, being sternly warned not to walk up the slope at Bromley by owner Fred Pabst, even when his lift lines were endless—on and on.

SKIING HERITAGE's efforts are greatly appreciated by my family and our old skier friends. Keep up the good work!

John C. Calhoun
Helen Livingston
Jcjohn@rivermead.org

It might be interesting for readers of SKIING HERITAGE to know that the first recorded use of "après-ski," according to the book *Datation et Documents* by Jacquemin, Monique and Christiane Tetet, appeared in an issue of the French ski magazine *La Revue du Ski* published in November 1938.

John Allen
Runney, N.H.



It must have been hard for Mr. Lund to choose the après-ski places he featured—there were more such oases than one can count, and we all had our own favorites.

If I made a list in order of skiing fame, I would name the Krazy Kangaroh as number one in the world. It is part way up the Valluga in St. Anton, Austria, and getting from it to level ground below after one too many schnaps is a sight to behold. Many have tried it on serving trays—a wild scene. The Krazy Kangaroh was opened many years ago by two Australians and quickly became an all-star favorite. Bode Miller partied there last year after a World Cup win, a party that made the European press.

Allen Adler
Barton, Vt.

In the 1950s, I often attended après-ski tea dances at the Chesa Grischna in Klosters, one of the nicest ski resort hotels in Switzerland (currently listed in *1000 Places To See Before You Die*). It was frequented by celebrities such as Gene Kelly and his dancing troupe.

I am writing a historical essay on the ski industry in Switzerland, not-

continued next page

ing that the Brits pioneered alpine vacations on the Continent. From 1850 to 1865 they climbed more than 30 Swiss mountain peaks, fascinated by the image of the naturally virtuous mountain folk and the pristine alpine scenery praised by the French Romantic philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Johannes Badrutt, owner of the Kulm Hotel in St. Moritz, was a key figure. In 1864 (not 1895, as stated in your article) Badrutt told several English summer guests that winter in St. Moritz was even more beautiful than in summer. He urged them to come in winter and said he would not charge them for lodging if they didn't love it. Four aristocratic English families came back for Christmas in 1864

and they found the winter wonderful. In a few years, St. Moritz was welcoming more visitors in winter than in summer.

Besides such après-ski pursuits as whisky and gambling, the Brits liked sports and competition. The first competition at St. Moritz started with the "Lake Run" for sledges in 1872, followed by the "Village Run" in 1873. Curling was introduced in 1880, figure skating in 1882, Cresta sledding in 1885, skeleton sledding in 1888, bobsledding in 1889, Canadian snowshoeing in 1886, bandy (the forerunner of ice hockey) in 1887, the Alpina Ski Club in 1903, and the first international jumping competition in 1904.

Luzi Hitz
llzlhitz@bluewin.ch

Mr. Hitz is correct on the date of the first Swiss hotel to remain open in winter. The first European international jumping competitions, however, were held in Stockholm during Sweden's 1901 Nordic Games as well as during the Second Nordic Games in Norway at Kristiania in 1903. In 1904, the Austrians held an international jumping competition as part of their first Nordischen Spiele at Murzzuschlag.

Thank you for including Sun Valley in your history of après-ski. We appreciate your thorough research in all but one instance. I refer to page 7 of the article, in which the photo caption states the "Hokey Pokey" was taking place in the Duchin Room. In fact, the dance was the "Bunny Hop" at Trail Creek Cabin. Also, photo credit should have been

Ski St. Moritz With ISHA And Penny Pitou

February 29-March 8, 2008 • \$2,095 per person double occupancy

St. Moritz With elegance, prestige, and a variety unparalleled by any other resort, Switzerland's



St. Moritz is the world's No. 1 winter playground. There's an impressive choice of skiing on five major mountains, including 220 miles of meticulously

groomed slopes serviced by 56 lifts. Non-ski activities include winter horse racing, bobsledding, tennis, or shopping in dozens of chic shops. Afternoon tea, on a sunny cafe terrace, is a must. A whole world of entertainment, from informal bistros to the Casino and elegant nightclubs, fills your evenings.

Crystal Hotel Situated directly at the center of the village, just steps from the lift that whisks you to one of the most glorious ski areas in the region, is the Crystal Hotel. All rooms, newly renovated, have a special charm. The lobby is spacious with an open fireplace. The Piano Bar is the ideal place to relax after skiing or before dinner. The "Wellfit" spa features men's and women's saunas, steam bath, and a workout room equipped with the latest machines. We'll dine each evening in our own private dining room. Centrally located with the finest cuisine, the Crystal Hotel is a gem among hotels anywhere.



What your trip includes: Transfers between airport and hotel, seven nights' accommodation at the Crystal Hotel, buffet breakfast and dinner daily, welcome cocktails, free use of hotel spa, local ski guides, taxes and surcharges. Penny Pitou will be your personal escort. Approximate cost of a six-day St. Moritz/Engadine ski pass: \$280. Airfare not included (price from Boston or JFK approximately \$700, other gateways available). Single supplement: \$225 (limited availability)

A portion of the income generated from this trip will be donated to the International Skiing History Association (ISHA)

Penny Pitou Travel, 55 Canal St., Laconia, NH 03246, phone (800) 552-4661, email kimt@pennypitoutravel.com

given to Sun Valley Resort.

Please don't hesitate to contact us to verify any future delectable tidbits.

A footnote: Some claim that then local Larry Laprise, a member of the Ram Trio, wrote the words for the Hokey Pokey specifically for our après-ski crowd.

Shannon Besoyan
Archivist, Sun Valley Resort
Sun Valley, Idaho

Red Stockings

With regard to Friedl Pfeifer and the Red Stockings (Morten Lund's letter, March 2007 issue), the lady's name was not Alice Kiera at the time of the Red Stockings, but Alice Wolfe. The 1936 *American Ski Annual* contains a wonderful article on the Red Stockings contributed by Alice Danrosch Wolfe. This is the women's team that participated in the 1936 Winter Olympics. Otto Furrer and Hermann Tschol were the two coaches, as Nick Howe correctly noted in his article on the Red Stockings in the June 2006 issue. Friedl Pfeifer had no hand in coaching the 1936 team. Betty Woolsey, captain of that team, in discussing the following year's team in the 1937-38 *American Ski Annual*, does mention that Alice Wolfe had taken on Pfeifer to help train the 1937 team. But that came after the Red Stockings had stirred up the distaff side of the ski world in the 1936 Olympic year. Just wanted to keep the timeline straight.

Allen Adler
Barton, Vt.

Missing Evangelist

It was most interesting for us to read Seth Masia's article "The Evangelists" on pioneer ski shops in your last issue. We were the owners of California Sportsman, one of the early ski shops in Southern California, so we could

easily identify with the experiences of the shop owners in the early 1950s.

We were disappointed, though, that we were not included in your list of early California ski shops. This is not to be critical of ISHA. We are enthusiastic ISHA members and can understand the difficulties you must have had in compiling such a list, but we do want to set the record straight.

To our knowledge, the earliest ski shop in Southern California was Vandegrift's Ski Hut in downtown Los Angeles. I went to work for Tyler Vandegrift not long after the end of World War II. His main business was men's shoes, and the ski shop was in the back of the store. A man named Art Kelly opened the California Sportsman just around the corner from Vandegrift's. I went to work for Art, and then purchased his store in the mid-1950s.

That downtown L.A. store was eventually closed, and we operated three stores in the San Fernando Valley into the late 1980s, when we sold the business. We sponsored, along with Hollywood Sporting Goods and Tex's Sporting Goods in Santa Monica, the first ski television show in Southern California.

I believe any of the eight Southern California ski shops you list would agree that California Sportsman was one of the leading ski dealers during that period. Another would be Sports Ltd., owned by Bob Bergstrom, who worked for us at California Sportsman before opening his own successful ski shop.

Tom Coles
Bend, Ore.

Life at Peckett's

I visited the ISHA website and noted an entry in "Important Dates in Ski History" regarding Peckett's on Sugar Hill, New Hampshire. The website notes that, in 1929, two

Germans were the first instructors. Actually, one of the instructors was an American—Blair Wood, an undergraduate at Dartmouth College (Class of 1930). Blair remembered that winter vividly, because it was then that he met Eleanor Parfitt from Manchester, New Hampshire, who later became his wife. Blair and Eleanor were my parents, so I have somewhat of a vested interest in the subject. Dad later wrote up his memories of his skiing career from 1916 (age 8) through his retirement from the sport in 1988.

John Wood
Boulder Colo.

We thank Mr. Wood for sending us an interesting manuscript written by his father. Excerpts follow:

"That fall I received a phone call from a representative of Peckett's on Sugar Hill, inviting me to an interview in Boston. They were seeking an assistant ski instructor, and I had been recommended by Dan Hatch, the director of the Dartmouth Outing Club."

"Katharine Peckett had brought home from Europe some well-designed ski equipment and they had engaged Herman somebody to act as instructor. He was not much better than I was. We could both stem and do an approximation of the stem christie. He also taught a "scissors christie" which places the weight on the inside ski, a wholly unorthodox maneuver."

"I remember that among this affluent group [of guests] there was virtually no stylish ski clothing. One of my duties was fitting skis, and I did this on all manner of boots—from sandals to galoshes. I cannot remember one bona fide ski boot. And Eleanor, wearing her brother's hiking boots, was one of the best equipped. We skied to Butternut Lodge for dinner, returning by moonlight, and [on other occasions] made bobsled runs down Sugar Hill and ate the best food in the North Country."

continued on page 47

FOUND!

A Photographic Treasure

Seventy years ago, Nicholas Morant began to capture the beauty of a new sport—alpine skiing.

By John Fry

He was Canada's Ansel Adams. His dramatic pictures of trains, landscapes and people appeared in *Life*, *Look*, and *National Geographic*, on dollar bills and postage stamps. Photography buffs hail him as a genius. Little known is that Nicholas Morant, during a period concentrated mostly in the 1940s, created a portfolio of skiing pictures that alone would justify ranking him as one of the greatest ski photographers who ever lived.

Traveling across the continent out of his home in Banff, Alberta, Nick Morant began in the late 1930s to compose exquisite photographs of

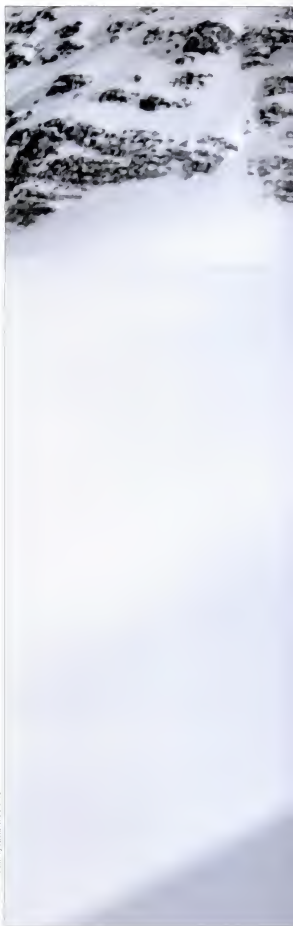
winter scenes involving skiers, the new breed of outdoor sportsman. Among them were celebrities, ski instructors, and racers, although they often served merely as accessories amid the mountains and forests that Morant treasured most.

Morant was a staff photographer for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), and the originals of many of his finest ski pictures can be found in the archives of the CPR under the Windsor Station in downtown Montreal. With the help of Bob Kennell, archivist and manager of CPR's Heritage Services, I explored the archive last year and chose a dozen

rarely seen images to be reproduced here for SKIING HERITAGE readers. In addition to the CPR archive, Morant's life's work is housed in the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff.

That a job as a photographer for a railroad led Morant to feature skiing was no accident. By 1938, when he started, more than 100,000 skiers each winter were buying train tickets to reach rope-tow hills on CPR trains. For the railways, skiing was big business.

A one-time journalist, Morant brought patience as well as passion to his work. He often spent days, even weeks, awaiting exactly the right light and snow conditions to make a black and white picture with his large format cameras. His work exposed him to not inconsiderable risk. He was aboard an aircraft that almost disintegrated over Mt. McKinley in Alaska. During a photo assignment in the Canadian Rockies, he fought a grizzly bear that killed the Swiss guide accompanying him. Terribly mauled, broken and torn, Morant himself survived. That was 1939. In the end, he died in a Calgary hospital at the age of 88. His work lives on...gloriously.



Nicholas Morant, 1910-1998.



Erling Strom arcs a Morant-picture-perfect turn on virgin snow near Mount Assiniboine in the heart of the Canadian Rockies. The year was 1948. Strom—a pioneer climber and ski instructor—operated a remote camp catering to skiers, climbers, and hikers at Assiniboine.



A staff photographer for the Canadian Pacific Railway for half a century, Morant photographed the popular ski trains that carried hundreds of thousands of skiers into the Laurentians and the Canadian Rockies over 53 winters. With the construction of better highways, skiers increasingly switched to automobiles, and the last ski trains ran out of Montreal in 1981.



Canadian Pacific Railway Archives M-411

In heavily Roman Catholic Quebec before the 1970s, celebrating mass on Sunday morning or Saturday evening was a part of the weekend ritual of skiing. These skiers are exiting a church in the village of Ste. Marguerite, a Laurentians hotbed of skiing in the late 1930s when Morant took this picture. As a concession to the skiers, priests often conducted their services outdoors on the snow.



Canadian Pacific Railway Archives M-723

Skiers and their wooden skis were sardined into special ski trains that ran out of Montreal on weekends. Ahead of the Boston & Maine, Union Pacific and any U.S. railway company, the Canadian Pacific Railway created North America's first special rail schedule for skiers, ferrying them from Montreal into the Laurentians, starting in 1928. Ten years later, Morant was aboard this northbound railway car that dropped its passengers off at stations from Shawbridge, home of the world's first rope tow, to St. Jovite and Mont Tremblant, home to Canada's first chairlift.

Light, shadows, and lace-like tree branches meld in this Morant photo of a woman cross-country skiing in the Laurentians. Possibly she was on the famous Maple Leaf trail, blazed by the legendary Jackrabbit Johanssen in the 1930s and 1940s. Morant's preparations for taking a picture were so painstaking and careful that when he finally shot a scene he needed only two or three 3 x 4-inch negatives to achieve the result he'd conceived. He brought along his own portable dark room to verify that he'd got what he wanted.



A hot bathtub soak in her hotel room could not come soon enough for this skier who hastily stripped out of her leather lace boots, heavy woolen socks, and long underwear. The slight suggestion of eroticism in Morant's staging here is reminiscent of the après-ski action of Leni Riefenstahl in the 1920s movies made by Arnold Fanck.



Canadian Pacific, Railway Archives M6119





Kings of parallel. In the winter of 1947, World Champion Emile Allais (above left), freshly arrived in North America from France, joined Chateau Frontenac Ski Hawks ski school director Fritz Loosli (above right) to demonstrate the advantages of the unadulterated parallel turn. Morant was on hand to photograph the two. Not coincidentally, the Chateau Frontenac hotel was owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, Morant's and Loosli's employer. Before Allais' arrival, the Swiss Loosli had pioneered a teaching system, sympathetic to Allais', that started students with traversing and turns, skis held parallel. A couple of hundred miles to the south in New Hampshire at Mt. Cranmore, Hannes Schneider was still ruling over the traditional Arlberg stem Christie approach that dominated ski teaching in North America at the time.



Canadian Pacific Railway Archives M-3714



Big-time radio announcer makes big-time sitzmark. In perhaps the least flattering photograph ever taken of him skiing, Lowell Thomas (left) allowed Morant to photograph him after a fall. Thomas' radio broadcasts played a major role in making Quebec's snowbound mountains, particularly Mont Tremblant, known to Americans. Morant's pictures similarly influenced Canadians.

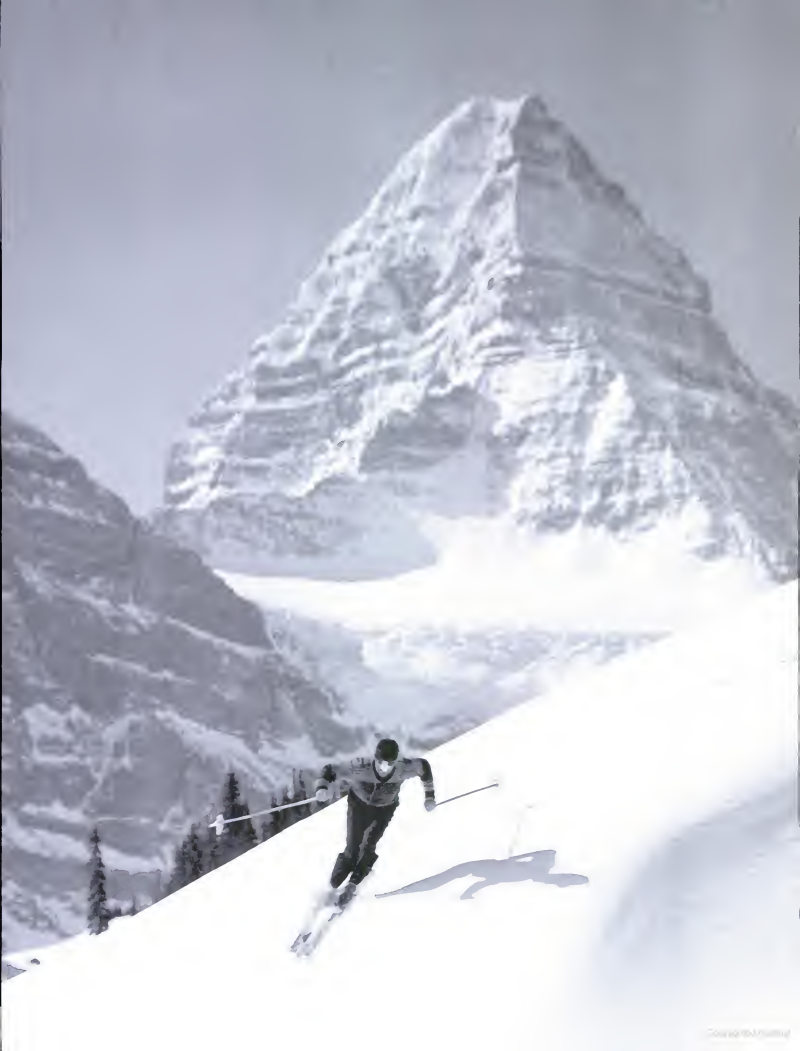


The mission of the early ski publicist was to transform the fear of cold into an appreciation of warmth...to demonstrate that snubathing on snow is as inviting as on a beach. Morant used skis and poles to frame this picture of skiers tanning above treeline near Sunshine Village, Alberta. Among the early meccas of premier powder skiing in North America, Sunshine is not far from Banff, where Morant lived.



A skier prepares the base of his hickories for a day of deep snow skiing at Sunshine Village high in the Canadian Rockies in 1947. Like other great early ski photographers—his contemporary Ray Atkeson and an earlier Winston Pote—Morant exploited intensive back-lighting to heighten the drama of his black and white images.

How many hours—perhaps days—did Morant spend awaiting the exact moment when Erling Strom and his shadow would coalesce to create this 1948 action image? The backdrop is Mount Assiniboine, known as the “Matterhorn of the Rockies,” a frequent focus of Morant’s camera. Strom’s camp at Assiniboine was the site of North America’s earliest regularly operated aircraft-assisted skiing. He also operated a ski lodge on the mountain road at Stowe, Vermont.



Ski Tunes, Rotation Nixed, GS Racing Too Sissyfied?

80 Years Ago

U.S. DOWNHILL DEBUTS. The first modern downhill race in the U.S. is run on Mt. Moosilauke, New Hampshire on March 8, 1927. It's won by Dartmouth's Charles N. Proctor.

In other Dartmouth news, Otto Schniebs emigrates from Germany to become the first to teach the Arlberg method in the U.S. He later becomes coach of the Harvard ski team, then one of history's most successful ski team coaches beginning in 1930 at Dartmouth, turning out six championship teams in six years.



Moosilauke champ Charlie Proctor

70 Years Ago

RACING TOO SAFE? Reflecting on America's first giant slalom on Mt. Washington's Tuckerman Headwall (April 4, 1937), 1936 U.S. Olympic

racer Robert Livermore Jr. writes in the 1937-38 *American Ski Annual* of the problems that will plague skiing "if such races are used to replace the point-to-point downhill races of today in the

interests of safety.

"Stressing the value of safety should be watched very carefully, in that progress in skiing depends on a certain amount of initiative. If the controls used in today's race become a feature of all races and replace most of the straight races where initiative and a certain amount of 'skiing beyond oneself' are necessary, American skiers will cease to progress as rapidly toward the European degree of perfection as they have—may cease altogether.

"If, in all races for the last few years, controls had made such speed and gumption impossible, I believe very few skiers would have learned to ski as fast as they do today. I am afraid of abuses which may grow out of the too infrequent running of such races and of the over-control of speed and daring.

"By attempting to make arbitrary rules for those who do not like the idea of endangering themselves, one penalizes the very ability of those who race."

50 Years Ago

MUSIC TO SKI BY. Columbia Records has released a new album especially for skiers, called *Ski Trails*. It features such songs as "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," "Moonlight in Vermont," and "Baby, It's Cold Outside." Other ski songs on the market are "The Clicking of the Skis" and "The Ski Song" by Van Hall.

TECHNIQUE REVOLT. French theoretician Georges Joubert writes *Ski Technique Moderne*, the first book to suggest that upper-body motion should not initiate the turn, but that the turn should begin in the lower body. To facilitate the idea, Bob Lange of Dubuque, Iowa, begins reworking ski boots by substituting plastic for leather components.

40 Years Ago

WE'LL TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTE. Try driving a brand new Ford Galaxie off the 40-meter ski jump at Lake Placid, New York. The J. Walter Thompson advertising agency of New York City did it eight times in two days, picking up some remarkable footage for a TV commercial demonstrating the safety features of the car. The Ski Club of Lake Placid happily sanctioned the event.

THE MORNING AFTER. A management check in the Lost and Found department at Powder Hill, Connecticut, following a record-breaking Christmas Holiday weekend, turned up 200 right-hand gloves and 200 left-hand gloves—none of them matches.

30 Years Ago

TOMORROW THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART? Sharing honors with the Bang & Olufsen high-fidelity stereo, the Porsche 911-S Targa, and the Enstrom 280C Shark helicopter, a pair of Hanson Avanti ski boots made *Fortune Magazine's* 25 Best-Designed Products list. Unfortunately (see pg. 40), the honor did nothing to bolster Hanson's longevity.

SELL YOUR SNOWMAKING STOCK. It's official: There's entering a new Ice Age. The trend is toward cold. Scientists have analyzed fossils obtained at various depths of the ocean floor. By plotting variations in the organisms and matching that against the earth's orbit, they predict substantially more glaciation in the next 3,000 years—and some increment in snow cover.

When Les Was More

Success or failure? Kinetic resort builder (Sunday River) and visionary entrepreneur (American Skiing Company), Les Otten leaves a legacy of both.

Sharon McNeill



The history of ski area ownership is rife with big dreamers and even bigger egos. Alex Cushing treated his Squaw Valley as a personal fiefdom, typically ignoring the views of those who opposed him. Walt Schoenkecht, Mount Snow's founder, was long on vision and short on financial prudence. With his brewery inheritance, Fred Pabst once owned a chain of rope-tow ski areas, believing that single ownership would make them more efficient. It didn't, and Pabst lost money. The 20th Century was briefly the stage of another ski resort impresario, whose boom inevitably was followed by a bust.

By Scott Andrews

The verdict of history is often mixed in the way it judges people. That is especially true of entrepreneur Leslie B. Otten, who by all accounts was the dominant, most charismatic figure in the ski resort business in the 1990s, as Vail's George Gillett was in the 1980s.

As a skiing innovator, Otten rates well, but history is likely to regard him as a financial failure. He was the prime mover behind one of the more catastrophic slides experienced by Wall Street in the leisure-time business.

Otten started by expanding Sunday River from a small local area in winter-remote Bethel, Maine, into a northeastern powerhouse, attracting 600,000 skier visits per winter.

Convinced that he knew how to replicate his success nationally, Otten set out to seek the financing and borrowing power to acquire ski resorts from New England to the Far West. He created the American Skiing Company (ASC), which in November 1997 went public at \$18 per share amidst much hoopla and expectations of future growth.

Between 1994 and 1998, Otten went on a buying binge that led to the takeover of nearby Sugarloaf in Maine; Attitash Bear Peak in New Hampshire; giant Killington in Vermont, plus Sugarbush and Mount Snow; Steamboat in Colorado; the Canyons in Utah; and Heavenly in California. As a result, his ASC became the largest operator of alpine skiing and snowboarding resorts in the United States, embracing golf operations, hotels, shops and lucrative real estate development.

The Otten magic that worked so well at Sunday River, however, didn't translate into a successful national multi-million-dollar, multi-resort model. Less than four years after the \$18 initial public offering, ASC's accumulated deficits and mushrooming debt—coupled with the loss of investor confidence—wiped out 95 percent of the stock's value, and during this past season his once-mighty company imploded, devolving into independent component parts.

But viewed from the perspective of the recreational enthusiast, Otten remains one of the sport's most positive, most forceful figures—a practical visionary whose far-reaching influence still pervades today's ski scene. Otten was an early promoter in the shaped-ski revolution and innovative learn-to-ski programs, snowmaking on a massive scale, frequent-skier programs, and quarter-share condo ownership. And although ASC failed as a corporate ski empire, each of the resorts that Otten once owned still enjoys a loyal skiing constituency and a measure of financial health.

If history's judgment is ambivalent, it's because both perspectives represent valid viewpoints. And unlike many historical figures whose stories have been recounted on



Black Media

Sunday River, 1988. Otten's heady expansion—pre-ASC—promised prosperous times.

these pages, Otten remains active on the periphery of the ski scene, and could return any day as a major player.

Second Grade to Siberia

Leslie B. Otten was born in 1949, the only child of Albert Otten, a Jewish industrialist who had fled his native Germany in 1937 and later built a successful scrap-metal business in New Jersey. By the time young Les reached second grade in 1956, he was introduced to skiing by a schoolmate whose father dealt in surplus 10th Mountain Division equipment.

Otten's ski buddy had a sister, and for several years his friend's father drove the three kids to mountains all over New York's Catskills, Adirondacks, and southern Vermont. Killington was one of many ski resorts established in the mid-1950s and it quickly became Otten's favorite place.

When he enrolled at Ithaca College in upstate New York, Otten taught skiing at nearby Greek Peak. Both Kil-

lington and Greek Peak were early adopters of snowmaking, and the teenage instructor was quick to size up the significance.

"One of the reasons we all flocked to Killington in the 1960s was that they had snowmaking," Otten recalls. "By the time I got to Greek Peak in 1967, I was being paid money to teach skiing on man-made snow to throngs and throngs of high school and junior high school kids, and that made a real impression on me."

Selling visions to others has always been an Otten specialty. When he started at Ithaca he enrolled as a theater major before switching to business, ruefully noting that although he loved comedy, he often ruined jokes by laughing before the punch line.

Otten was an indifferent student who often skipped class and homework assignments. But one class project got his attention: Otten and two classmates drafted a business plan for a ski area at nearby Danby Mountain.

Not only did the plan get top academic marks, Otten started raising money to make it happen. He rounded up commitments for \$250,000 before a professional ski consultant convinced him that Danby's slopes were too steep for a commercially successful area. But he still has the drawings he intended for Danby's trails. (The area was never developed.)

The project also foreshadowed Otten's first real-world job. After collecting his bachelor's degree from Ithaca, he landed a full-time job: assistant lift technician at Killington. For \$2.25 an hour Otten disassembled and lubricated sheave trains and greased gearboxes, pinions and bullwheels. It wasn't the sort of career that his wealthy father envisioned but, in consolation, there was an opportunity to enter Killington's management training program.

Otten's first assignment that could be legitimately called "management" was to prepare a maintenance plan for the Killington gondola. After successfully completing that hurdle, Otten was assigned to paint the lifts.

His second foray into management was to revamp the check-in procedures for the hundreds of people who enrolled in Killington's weeklong learn-to-ski programs. After analyzing the resort's system, he devised a new scheme that reduced 28 staff to nine. Otten saved the resort \$12,000 that first year—and created 19 enemies.

Feeling threatened by the environmental restrictions of Vermont's landmark Act 250, Killington responded by purchasing a struggling locals-only area in western Maine called Sunday River Skiway. Management ultimately didn't think much of the place. On the ground or on paper, Sunday River offered little except plenty of room to grow.

Otten remembers the first hint that he might be transferred to Killington's Maine outpost came from an off-hand quip in the men's room. A Killington co-worker



Shawn McNeill

Otten and freestyler Stu O'Brien ham it up in 1990 at the Legends of Freestyle, one of many events that brought attention to upstart Sunday River.

emerged from a stall and joked with the 23-year-old trainee, "How'd you like to go to Siberia?"

Otten says he doesn't know why he was picked to manage Sunday River. Perhaps it was his familiarity with ski lifts. Killington's new resort came with a rare—extinct today—Pullman-Berry double chair, which was constantly breaking down.

Dave Irons, a longtime ski writer, directed Sunday River's ski patrol when Otten arrived from Vermont. Irons recalls Otten's style as "inspirational."

"Les got tremendous loyalty from his people," says Irons. "He would go out and drive a snowcat, grease a lift, or climb a lift tower if there were a problem. He was right there, hands on." Wende Gray, Otten's first marketing manager, adds, "He's not afraid to get his hands dirty. Les can run a lift, drive a Piston Bully, make snow, grease the sheaves, shake the hay, shovel snow, and flip the hamburgers."

Although Killington allocated little money for Sunday River marketing, Otten's theatrical spellbinding proved invaluable for attracting attention.

Two episodes bear an unmistakable Otten imprimatur. During the 1974-1975 season, he created a memorable gateway for customers. Using snow guns, a 20-foot-high whale was built in front of the lodge. Then an entry tunnel was carved, surmounted by a large sign that announced "Welcome to the Magic Kingdom." Although some complained that the snow should have gone on the slopes, Otten shrugged off the criticism with, "I'm in sales. There's plenty more where that came from."

The second was pure theater. At the height of the 1979-1980 New England snow drought, Otten orchestrated a plan. After alerting the news media, two Sunday River trucks, painted white for the occasion, were dispatched to Boston. A large dump truck was filled with machine-made snow, while Otten drove the second, carrying a portable snowmaking unit.

Arriving in Boston, they went straight to City Hall and staged a mock breakdown where smartly attired female ski instructors tossed snowballs to amused passers-by. The police were not amused by Otten's antics; they arrested him. After a tongue-lashing in the bowels of police headquarters, he was released. They proceeded to the Boston Common, dumped the load and started making more snow—and skiers soon appeared.

Otten's caper cost little money and got lots of laughs—and lots of ink and air time from the city's newspapers and TV stations. The message was obvious: Come up to Sunday River—we have lots of snow.

Buys Sunday River

By the end of the 1970s, Otten realized that brilliant marketing wouldn't solve Sunday River's most basic problem: Killington had lost interest. Over the course of seven seasons, Otten could count only three significant invest-

ments: A mile-long snowmaking line had been installed, two tiny buildings had been enlarged, and 18 condominium units had been built. There were no new lifts, and the balky Pullman-Berry double chair still broke down. Otten was frustrated. But when he talked about resigning, his bosses countered with an unexpected opportunity: Take Sunday River off our hands and we'll help finance it.

In the summer of 1980, Otten invested \$32,000 of his own, borrowed \$1.2 million—mostly on a note from Killington—and became the sole owner of an off-the-beaten-track resort that had one modest base lodge, three T-bars, one Poma lift, and one very troublesome chairlift. Skier visits numbered less than 30,000.

After struggling through his first season of ownership—at



Hands-on and always on the hill, Otten spent his office moments brainstorming Sunday River's next big promotion.

times raising money by selling off scrap metal—Otten ended the 1980-1981 season with a healthy jump in ticket sales, a small positive cash flow, and a determination to think big.

Two early measures were mostly promotional, but they introduced a new Sunday River trademark: a longest-in-Maine ski season. For starters, in 1981 Otten began offering free Thanksgiving Day dinners to all ticket-holders. In 1983 he began to offer free skiing every May 1.

Sunday River's first physical expansion was modest enough, to a gently sloping ridgeline just west of the base lodge where there was some fairly flat ground and a metaphorical clean slate.

"We convinced the Hall ski lift company and the Small Business Administration to loan us \$100,000, and in the summer of 1981 we built the second chairlift at Sunday River down at South Ridge," Otten recalls. "That chairlift really moved the company to the next level."



Otten and mountain manager Burt Mills glow during the 1991 opening of Aurora Peak.

"Unlike our competition, we were the only area that had a chairlift specifically for beginners. Instead of riding a rope tow or T-bar or Pomalift, our beginning skiers could ride a chairlift. It opened up a whole new world for beginners, and that gave us the impetus to say we're going to teach people how to ski. That became our mantra, and we taught tens of thousands of people to ski over ensuing decades."

The South Ridge novice area was the first of many expansion stages that transformed Sunday River into Maine's largest ski area over the next 15 years. After the two westernmost sub-areas had been developed for the 1995-1996 season, the skein of trails and lifts stretched more than two miles across. By that time, the resort included three base lodges, one summit lodge, two hotels, a ski dorm, and a half-dozen ancillary buildings. In 1996, the resort tallied 589,000 skier visits, second busiest in New England.

"Les was a dreamer with a big vision, and he had that vision when he bought the area," says Irons. "He had blown-up topographic maps that covered the entire wall of his office, and there were all kinds of lifts and trails on those maps. He knew where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do."

Innovations Pay Off

Les Otten didn't invent anything in skiing, but his far-reaching innovations in business practices still pervade the industry.

Teaching beginners was Otten's first paying job in the ski business, and a new approach to instruction became a keystone at Sunday River.

Building Sunday River's novice area in the 1980s was an early move, and his one-day learn-to-ski program generated ongoing controversy. Revolving around a "guarantee," the program went through several iterations and attracted many thousands of students. It was ridiculed by many professional instructors who accused Otten of promoting superficial technique at the expense of in-depth skills.

But Otten believed that if first-time ski experiences are fun for new skiers, they'll keep coming back to the resort where they started—and buying multi-day tickets, then season tickets, then condos, and putting their kids on skis. His efforts simultaneously reflected his Killington training in the Graduated Length Method of teaching and underscored his goal of radically compressing the resort's famed learn-to-ski week.

Years later Otten formalized, and nationally franchised, his program as the "Perfect Turn."

In the mid-1990s, the shaped-ski revolution neatly dovetailed with Otten's philosophy, and business methods. Sunday River was an early proponent of Elan's SCX parabolic ski, setting up free demo programs beginning in 1995. Three years later, when Elan hesitated

to massively roll out its pioneering concept, Otten switched his entire rental fleet to shaped skis by buying thousands of pairs of Rossignol's entry into the shaped-ski market.

That gutsy move garnered praise in the 1998 journal of the Professional Ski Instructors of America, and it also earned Otten national recognition as an industry innovator. In a 2004 retrospective, the *Boston Globe's* Tony Chamberlain wrote, "A large part of Otten's positive legacy was as a Johnny Appleseed of shaped skis."

Throughout his career, Otten has been a lightning rod for praise and criticism—often on the same issue. When he cut White Heat in 1988, Sunday River's signature expert run, he pushed the grammatical envelope by calling it the "steepest longest widest" (Otten deliberately omitted the commas) lift-served trail in the East.

White Heat was much more than hype. The trail is vintage Otten: a huge bulldozed-and-blasted swath—verbally blasted by some as an eyesore—blanketed by powerful snowmaking and served by its own quad lift. The Legends of Freestyle exhibition and the annual Bust 'n' Burn mogul competition drew thousands to the resort's infamous new run and became signature events.

Wende Gray recalls that competing head-to-head with nearby ski areas was another Otten hallmark during those years. Every morning she would call the competition's published trail-and-lift reports, then compile and compare them with Sunday River's. When skiers arrived in the lodges each morning, they were greeted by freshly printed table signs—headlined "Congratulations for choosing Sunday River today"—that contained a resort-by-resort ranking for that specific day.

On another occasion, Otten hired an airplane to tow a banner touting Sunday River's superior trail counts—and flew it over the slopes at several competing areas in New Hampshire. A similar message to New Hampshire skiers was delivered via targeted radio commercials. His com-

petitors raged, the media chuckled, and skiers flocked to Sunday River to check out the brouhaha for themselves.

One lasting development was a frequent-skier incentive plan that emulated the successful airlines model. Begun for the 1985-1986 season at Sunday River, the program went through several iterations over two decades, eventually including a nationwide multi-resort direct-to-lift card.

For many, the Sunday River "Silver Bullet Express" ski train was Otten's most memorable innovation. He purchased an entire train—coaches, dining car, and observation lounge—then hired the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad to haul it from Portland to Bethel.

Service started with enormous fanfare in December 1993, but the train's rosy prospects quickly evaporated. Amtrak's promised Boston-Portland connection was delayed for years. The SL&A pulled the Silver Bullet Express at agonizingly slow speeds and its lackadaisical schedule was aggravated by frequent delays. Railroad equipment often froze up—and Otten was left out in the cold. After four frustrating seasons, the Silver Bullet made its final run in 1997.

As an economic enterprise, the Silver Bullet Express couldn't attract enough passengers to pay expenses, but it received enormous attention. It also prefaced one of Otten's first business failures: His Bethel Station commercially development flopped as badly as its centerpiece train.

Handicapped Program

Of all Otten's projects, none has brought more universal praise than Maine Handicapped Skiing. The organization was launched in 1982 at the urging of Dr. Omar "Chip" Crothers, an orthopedic surgeon from Portland and a Sunday River regular.

One of Crothers' patients was the severely disabled daughter of Otten's ski school director. Encumbered by braces, the five-year-old child struggled mightily to walk, but she could happily slide down the bunny slope with the help of friendly off-duty instructors. The doctor noticed.

When Crothers suggested that skiing could be a powerful tool to aid physically disabled kids, Otten saw an opportunity to jump in and help. The two founded Maine Handicapped Skiing, which started with one part-time staffer and a handful of students working out of a furnace room in the base lodge. First aboard was Meredith Elcome, a rehabilitation nurse from Portland, who remembers that Otten enthusiastically supported the new venture in many ways.

"We relied on Sunday River for all of our equipment for a number of years," Elcome says. "Les was hoping that his ski area could foster recreation for people with disabilities. He was excited to see the program blossom and to see people meet challenges and succeed. I think it was as rewarding for him as it was for us."

Today MHS has its own slopeside building—on land

donated by Otten—where a professional staff of half a dozen plus a corps of 350-plus volunteer instructors serve more than 250 physically handicapped children and adults. Satellite facilities are located at Sugarloaf/USA and at two cross-country ski centers, Sunday River Cross-Country Ski Center in Newry and Pineland Farms in New Gloucester.

American Skiing Company Launched

As Sunday River approached build-out in the mid-1990s, Otten focused his energies elsewhere—to the development of the American Skiing Company. Between 1994 and 1998 he built the nation's largest corporate skiing empire, a publicly traded company that stretched from Maine to California and included nine major resorts.

At the time, Otten spoke of many advantages of a national company, including the ability to negotiate big cost savings in insurance, snowcats, and chairlifts. Other benefits included opportunities for cross-selling between resorts and the intangible leverage gained by being a market leader in all phases of the ski industry. Plus ASC's transcontinental spread offered some insurance against bad weather.

But the American Skiing Company was hastily built with

Harbaugh: 'Because of ASC's leverage, everything had to go right for their business model to work. They didn't really have the ability to get through a bad winter or two.'

massive infusions of outside money and it never matched the runaway success of Sunday River—which was a single resort situated in a limited geographical market. ASC faced financial catastrophe almost from the start, and by 2001 Otten was ousted from the company he founded. In early 2007 its total demise as a corporate chain of ski resorts was imminent as ASC raised cash by selling its most valuable assets: its remaining resorts.

Otten began in 1994 by buying Attitash Mountain in the nearby Mount Washington Valley of New Hampshire. It was a surprise move that profoundly rattled the Valley's stodgy skiing establishment.

Vermont was next. Sugarbush was Otten's first acquisition, then he became owner of his former employer in 1996 when he purchased Killington-based S-K-I and its entire portfolio of resorts, which included Mount Snow in Vermont and Sugarloaf/USA in Maine.

At one point, Otten also owned two other New Hampshire resorts—Mount Cranmore and Waterville Valley—but he was forced to unload them by the U.S. Justice Department due to perceived antitrust concerns. Pico Peak, another mountain that was acquired with S-K-I, was operated as part of Killington.

Stymied in the East by the Justice Department, Otten turned to the West, where ASC added The Canyons in

Utah, Steamboat in Colorado, and Heavenly in California in 1997.

November 6, 1997, was a landmark date. ASC went public, offering nearly 15 million shares at \$18, a price that pegged Otten's worth at nearly \$265 million. Trading began on the New York Stock Exchange using the coveted SKI ticker symbol that came along with the S-K-I merger. As a personal honor on that day, the former lift tech rang the opening bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Unlike some of his contemporaries in other industries, Otten was more than a buyer and wheeler-dealer. Expansion is part of his nature, and each resort he purchased was redeveloped, reconstructed, and enlarged. On a small scale, Otten added a second peak, three chairlifts, and a second base area at Attitash. On the grandest scale, he transformed Wolf Mountain, a mostly-locals ski area near Park City into The Canyons, which today ranks as Utah's largest ski area.

The plans for each resort included a Grand Summit Hotel, a rollout of Sunday River's quarter-share ownership model. Off-mountain ski shops were also part of the ASC plan. Although they amounted to small change in the vaster scheme of things, Otten's retail initiative aimed to leverage his success in bringing shaped skis to the mainstream market and capitalize on his new relationship with Rossignol.

ASC's coast-to-coast reach was impressive, but so was its mountain of debt. Between 1980 into the mid-1990s, Sunday River's expansion had been financed by retained earnings and a prudent debt load. But Otten's buying binge was financed by borrowing on a massive scale. For a three-year period in the early 2000s, interest payments averaged 14 percent of revenues.

ASC's sky-high leverage issue was noted by Jeff Harbaugh, writing in 2001 for *Ski Area Management*: "ASC's biggest problem, to put it simply, is that they can't earn enough revenue to pay their interest expense and still make a profit." Recently, Harbaugh explained: "Because of ASC's leverage, everything had to go right for their business model to work. They didn't really have the ability to get through a bad winter or two—as always happens in this industry."

Some ski industry observers add that Otten simply acted too aggressively and created a monster that he couldn't control. "He made a huge success of Sunday River," explains Tom Corcoran, former owner/developer of Waterville Valley, New Hampshire. "He had the ability to take a single area and make it work, but I don't think that Les had the temperament and the management ability to run a complex organization spread over a large area. I think that he just bit off more than he could chew."



Otten and his parabolic partner in 1995, kicking off a free demo program that even drew praise from PSIA.

Whatever the theory, there's no question that ASC's cash flow was hugely negative during the period. Otten's borrowings began with conventional commercial sources, but when ASC's mounting losses scared away the bankers, he resorted to alternative strategies.

By mid-2000, the company was scrambling to shore up its parlous finances through a variety of means, including bringing in a private investment bank from The Netherlands, allying with Texas-based Oak Hill Capital Partners, and negotiating a merger with Washington, D.C.-based MeriStar Resorts.

MeriStar had a chain of warm-weather resorts that the resulting new company—which would have been renamed Doral—wanted as insurance against adverse weather. But when

the MeriStar merger fell through in the spring of 2001, Otten was ousted by Oak Hill. He remained a forlorn voice on the ASC board of directors until resigning earlier this year.

But even as ASC imploded this past spring, Otten saw vindication in the fact that individual properties were fetching high prices from eager buyers. "It took more time for ASC to reap the benefits of being a national company than expected," Otten told this author. "And although its resorts are now selling for record values, the speed of the company's growth was too slow for its investors."

Since losing control of ASC, Otten has remained active with several business interests grouped under the rubric of LBO Enterprises, which maintains a small office in Bethel. On a national scale, Otten owns a company that makes equipment for video analysis of golfers and he is a major investor in a start-up internet shopping venture.

Near Sunday River, Otten develops real estate and owns the Phoenix, a mountainside eatery that sits on a rise opposite Sunday River's South Ridge Lodge. His most visible public role since 2002 has been as a part owner and vice chairman of the Boston Red Sox—ironically, the nemesis of his boyhood heroes, the New York Yankees.

But his foray into pro sports ended this past spring when Otten sold his share of the team, earmarking the proceeds to his attempt (not successful through mid May) to purchase Sunday River and Sugarloaf/USA from the disintegrating American Skiing Company. Forsaking his coveted share of the Red Sox to put together a bidding group for Maine's foremost ski areas is characteristic of Otten.

"I'll miss the Sox, but the chance to buy back the mountains was too much to pass up," says Otten. "Maine means a lot to me, and the chance to come back and make a difference is very high on my list."

Scott Andrews, a ski writer from Portland, Maine, has been reporting on Sunday River and Les Otten since 1985. He is a volunteer instructor at Maine Handicapped Skiing at Sunday River.

Chamonix Magnifique!

ISHA skiers join Penny Pitou for a week's ski adventure in France.

By Doug Pfeiffer

There were 30 of us, ages 38 to 80, on this first-ever ISHA European travel venture. Our group was an eclectic bunch—two International Skiing History Association directors, a podiatrist, retired college professor, several former ski industry execs, a bee-keeper, librarian, psychologist, computer specialist—in short, a compatible assemblage of avid skiers.

The March 9-17 venture was organized by the energetic 30-year alpine ski tour operator and Olympic double medalist Penny Pitou—and she picked a winner. Our destination for a week: incredible, wondrous, mountainous Chamonix, France, a place with an alpine heritage of 250 years.



Statues of Balmat and deSaussure in central Chamonix.

Chamonix, some 50 miles south of Geneva, Switzerland, is sited in a deeply glaciated U-shaped valley, at the base of the 15,865-foot Mont Blanc massif, the highest mass of upthrust glacier-clad granite in Europe's western Alps. It's arguable as to which is more famous—Chamonix and its 15-mile valley of villages or the awesome white-domed mountains that dominate the horizon.

Chamonix first gained wide recognition after 1741 when two Englishmen (Richard Pococke and William Windham) made a three-day trek from Geneva and found the secluded valley

native friendly, contrary to gossip, and visited the Mer de Glace—Sea of Ice—just one of the many frozen flows tumbling down from the huge ice cap covering the massif's seven summits. Upon the intrepid two—some's return, their tales of wonderment in the salons of Geneva inspired other adventurers.

One of them, in 1760, was Horace-Bénédict deSaussure, a Geneva naturalist who made a solo trip and, among other forays, hiked 2,000 feet up the steep south slopes

rising from the hamlet then known as Le Prieuré (The Priory)—to where we now skied at the tram-and-lift-served Le Brévent and La Flégère, where broad slopes above 6,000 feet and the tree line provide exciting skiing for any and all levels. He gazed in awe, just as we did—while skiing here our first day—across the valley at the glacier-covered mountain, its periphery punctuated

by dozens of aiguilles, needle-like pinnacles of rock. Not being of a mountaineering persuasion, deSaussure nonetheless recognized the scientific value of this high-altitude region. He offered a substantial reward to the first person to find the way up to Mont Blanc's highest summit. It took 26 years for that to happen.

That first person—really two—in August of 1786, were native sons Michel-Gabriel Paccard and Jacques Balmat, the former the region's first doctor, the latter a reclusive hunter and collector of semi-precious gems which could be and still can be pried out of



Roped skiers slip down from upper terminal to Vallée Blanche Glacier du Géant.

the mountain's matrix. Archives indicate that deSaussure himself had to wait yet another year for clement weather to be essentially carried up by a retinue of 18 guides. They also transported heavy scientific equipment plus his tent, a folding bed, a mattress, sheets, blankets, two frock coats, three jackets, a travel suit, a white suit, boots, gaiters, long and short pointed shoes, and a pair of slippers, to mention only part of deSaussure's self-indulgent need for creature comforts. Nevertheless, deSaussure's research into the mysteries of high-altitude atmospheric conditions and techniques for measuring them had worldwide impact and are of great value yet today.

Large bronze monuments in the main square in town pay tribute to these three first summiters of the Mount Blanc. Their hard-fought success brought the attention of the Brits, and they soon came to the region for its mountain-climbing potential. Most notable was Edward Whymper, first conqueror of the notorious Matterhorn rising in pyramidal splendor above Zermatt, Switzerland.

On our first ISHA day, on the groomed pistes at La Flégère, we were divided into four groups of similar skiing capability—and stamina—by guide

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Eric Thiolière (only certified mountain guides may lead groups down the Vallée Blanche or down the ever-abundant challenging off-piste terrain everywhere around this region). Each day one of such competent and often jovial English-speaking guides led a group down the spectacular Vallée Blanche, selecting a route commensurate with the group's skiing prowess.

Because of lift queues, to reach the gateway to that famous ski run required almost an hour's up-slope aerial tram travel time to the Aiguille du Midi. Riding the two cable cars, packed like asparagus spears in a glass jar, one had to be careful not to bump a neighbor whose backpack was hung not just with rope and carabiners, but crampons and an ice axe, with skis at attention next to him.

The elaborate upper terminal is prominently visible a neck-cranning 9,000 feet above the center of town. Construction for the tandem cableways was begun in 1924. It took 30 years to bring it to its present state, replete with restaurant, ski sundries shop, and other amenities. Once up there, we rode an elevator up an additional 100 feet to a viewing terrace to gawk and marvel at the spectacular 360-degree vista over alpine France, Switzerland, and Italy.

The Vallée Blanche

But it was time to ski. Only the more unsure did not join the descent. The rest—after harnessing chain-gang fashion, eight-to-a-rope tethered to our guides—walked through a tunnel of rock and ice, skis in hand, and in a more or less controlled sideslip descended a sharp spine of ice and snow to a small plateau where skis could safely be latched on. Opening before us was the Glacier du Géant, creating a snowfield that seemingly would swallow all of Colorado's Vail. It becomes enlarged further as it melts into the Tacul Glacier—filled with dangerous crevasses and seracs. The Tacul, in turn, becomes the famous Mer de Glace.

It's a variable five- to six-mile ski descent from departure point, down the Glacier du Géant, down the Tacul, down to the Mer de Glace junction, to a customary stop roughly halfway down, at the Refuge du Requin (Shark's Hut) for a typical \$20-\$30 lunch of the local *tariflette* (a thick toast covered with cheese, tomatoes, bacon or ham, and baked in a porcelain *ramekin*) and a carafe or two of taste-



Top of the alpine world. Viewing terrace on upper terminal of Aiguille du Midi provides spectacular views of alpine France, Switzerland, and Italy.

ful regional red wine.

It is so vast a region, rare are the encounters with any of the several hundred other skiers tasting its joys and tribulations. Suddenly comes the realization that those ants moving on snow are the skiers, riders, and rock and ice climbers with whom we had recently jostled elbows.

Skiing Options Abound

While the run down the Vallée Blanche is certainly a high point in one's skiing life, it isn't the only skiing around Chamonix, as we learned. Each guide, with his own eight-passenger minivan, picked us up mornings in front of the Hotel Mont Blanc, then drove us back from our day's outing. That might have been a 20-minute ride to the gentler slopes at Le Tour, at the east end of the valley, or a few minutes closer to the thigh-burning 9,000 feet of vertical at Les Grand Montets at Argentière, or the mostly groomed rolling boulevards at La Flégère and Brévent—and, of course, the Aiguille du Midi for an Vallée Blanche adventure.

A special treat was the day we bussed through the incredible 7.2-mile tunnel punched in 1966 through Mont Blanc itself, to reach more great skiing and food at Italy's Courmayeur. At this complex of aerial trams, chairlifts, drag lifts, and assorted groomed advanced intermediate to expert slopes, lunch was al fresco. The sweet Italian life—*la dolce vita*—prevailed: pizza, pasta, cheese dishes, the aroma of tomatoes, garlic, basil, and wine tantalizing the palate.

Our trip had other highlights, such as a guided walking tour of the town. The vehicle-free, slate-paved town square—its squat four- to six-story 1920s buildings, its statues, intriguing shops, and inviting restaurants—is only a few minutes' walk from the Alpine Museum. It is housed on two floors of a larger, early-1900s apartment building. The space for its exhibits is ample, with much of it devoted to mountain climbing and to local endeavors for survival in earlier times when cultivating flax and making it into cloth were important to the small community of subsistence farmers. Additionally, there is a replica of a mountain hut of rough-hewn planks with two tiny bunks, a rough table, a bench, and small iron stove—all crowded into a space surely not over 120 square feet. Folks were shorter, 100 years ago.

From an historical-minded skier's perspective, the museum's artifacts are spare. There are a few old skis and boots, and a few photos, but there is a sizable collection of vintage Chamonix and Olympic posters, all enhancing the region's ski racing heritage. And that is considerable, not the least of which includes the staging of the 1924 Winter Olympic Games, several World Championships at the close-by Les Houches resort, and the French National Championships.

At the Museum, a treat was in store for the ISHA group in the person of René Bozon, brother of Charles. Charles



Richard Allen

Seven days of sun, bluebird skies, unbeatable snow, and smiling faces.

Bozon

was one of Chamonix's great alpine racers in the 50s and early 60s, famous for winning medals in both the 1956 and 1960 Winter Olympics and a gold in slalom in the 1962 World Championships. Many of us knew him when he was a ski instructor at California's Squaw Valley. There he influenced thousands of us West Coast instructors with the updated French way of skiing—*projection circulaire*. His brother René, age 70, is four years younger than Charles would be. Sadly, in 1964 Charles was killed when a wind-slab avalanche swept to their death Bozon and 13 other members of a group about to tackle the awesome spires of the Aiguille Verte, one of the impressive spires thrusting thousands of feet upward from the Mer de Glace.

Our home for the week, the refurbished dowager four-star Hotel Mont Blanc is one of the four "Best of Mont Blanc" group. Especially satisfying were its spacious rooms, its marvelous views of all sides of the mountains, its cozy bar, and its restaurant Le Mafan. Breakfasts were typical self-serve European—breads, rolls, croissants, jams, cheese, cold cuts, eggs, bacon, and strong coffee. Dinners were a unique treat—five courses served on stunningly different porcelain dinnerware. Entrées, with an emphasis on artful presentation, were always delicious. The *coq au vin* and the "lacquered" (sweet spiced) scallops with "aubergine caviar" were lip-smacking good. Lunches, with appropriate lubrication of course, were always on the mountain.

Apart from the food, we enjoyed other surprises—a visit from buoyant, Mohawk-coiffed U.S. extreme skier Glen Plake who had anchored himself for the winter across the street from our hotel... a dinner visit by former French Olympic racing star and ski manufacturer, Leo Lacroix, who lives nearby at Lac Lemann... and an informative factory visit conducted by Jean-Renaud Daniel, international marketing manager of Dynastar skis.

In all, what more could a group of ski history-oriented, fun-loving skiers ask for? *



Chamonix devotee Sloan McBurney taste-tests an on-mountain delicacy.

Richard Allen

Jackson Hole's Alpenhof Lodge

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JOHN FRY

Lacking a native high-mountain culture of our own, American skiers began to import a ready-made one from Europe 75 years ago. The Austro-Bavarian alpine lifestyle crossed the Atlantic with huge success. As a lifestyle expression, it had everything—distinctive architecture, clothing, music, and a special vocabulary of ski technique.

German words like *schuss* and *wedeln* needed no translation...skiers directly absorbed them into the English language. You were a genuine skier if you learned how to sing "Edelweiss," and especially if you could produce a proper yodel as you pushed off down the slope. To establish après-ski credentials, it was helpful to wear heavy wool *loden* jackets with olive green collars and dazzling *dirdls* with sexy bodices. A rite of passage for an American wanting to qualify as an expert was a ski vacation in the Alps. Those who didn't go abroad assimilated the culture from the charming Austrian ski instructors who came to the U.S. to teach the sport.

As for lodging at a winter resort, indigenous New England farmhouses and western ranch homes couldn't match the skiing authenticity of the stucco and dark-chocolate buildings of the Alps, with their pitched roofs, massively overhanging eaves, ornately balustraded porches, and walls decorated with *Lufmalerei*—frescoes traditionally painted on the walls of alpine houses. These *gasthof*-style hostleries multiplied at the base of North America's fast-proliferating ski areas during the 1950s and 1960s.



Directly at the bottom of one of America's greatest ski mountains is this re-creation of a classic alpine hotel of the kind found in Garmisch and Kitzbühel.

Then, beginning in the late 1970s, architectural taste changed. At its best, it shifted to palatial, muscular log imitations of Mt. Hood's Timberline Lodge. At worst, it degenerated into hotels resembling Holiday Inns next to airports.

Meanwhile, a few American ski resort lodges struggle to preserve the Bavarian-heritage style—notably the Trapp Family Lodge at Stowe and the Sonnenalp and Gramshammer at Vail. None may be as fervent in their dedication to detail, however, as the Alpenhof in Teton Village at Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Alpenhof literally means mountain residence...in the case of Jackson Hole, a four-story magnification.

Dominating the Alpenhof's exterior are pitched roofs and balconies embellished with ornate balusters commonly seen on the classic hotels of Kitzbühel and Garmisch. Inside, the rooms are festooned with carved headboards, the bed tops puffed up with down comforters.

The Beginning

Alpenhof's history goes back 40 years to the very beginning of Teton Village, which in 1965 first established Jackson Hole as a big-mountain destination ski resort, with an aerial tram to the top of Rendezvous Mountain. Developer Paul McCollister envisaged a European-style village like Switzerland's Verbier at the base of the

mountain, with a half-dozen owner-occupied-and-operated lodges.

Alpenhof is all that remains of McCollister's original vision. The inn was built by the widely traveled New Jersey ski enthusiasts Dietrich and Anneliese Oberreit, who dreamed of running a lodge sensitive to their Swiss and Bavarian roots. To make up for their total lack of experience in the business, the Oberreits took correspondence courses in hotel management, and with the help of an architect supervised the building of Alpenhof. In the late spring of 1965, they packed their three children in the family station wagon, and moved stock and barrel to Jackson Hole.

Alpenhof opened in time for Christmas 1965 with 30 rooms—the first lodge in Teton Village. Over the next 20 years, the Oberreits added 10 more rooms and a ski shop. Peter Stiegler, brother of Teton ski school director Pepi Stiegler, served for a time as maitre d' hotel.

Among the Alpenhof's most enthusiastic annual skiing guests were Ed and Susan Cunningham. A graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and a one-time helicopter rescue pilot, Ed had skied all over Europe as well as America, and he instantly fell in love with the *gemütlichkeit* created by the Oberreits at Teton Village.

Alpenhof also happened to fit his plan to acquire and operate inns having a special cachet—a collection of romantic places, as the Cunninghams call them. They started with a couple of inns—the Pelican and Mountain Home in California, and a hotel in Scotland. As skiers, they wanted desperately to add Alpenhof to their mini-chain of exotic hostleries, but Oberreit for a long time was reluctant to sell. Finally, in 1988, he agreed to sell Alpenhof to the Cunninghams, who've since invested several million dollars in making the place, as Dietrich Oberreit says, "more Bavarian than we ever had it."



The lodge's Alpenrose dining room features a ceramic tile fireplace, painted korbels, and a menu of schnitzel and wurst. Inset, an ornate antique sled hangs from the ceiling.

As you enter the lobby, and deposit your skis in the ski room immediately on one side, you cross to the reception desk, which is backed by antique European ski posters and surmounted by a quaint cuckoo clock. Room numbers on ceramic plaques, with floral decorations, adorn the doors. Here and there you spot a painted pine chest and a painted or carved antique *Bauernschrank*—a cupboard or closet about two meters high. The

Cunninghams are seeking more of them for the Alpenhof.)

In the Bistro, a popular Teton Village après-ski hangout, cowbells and ceramic beer steins with pewter lids hang over the bar. The pride of the hotel is the Alpenrose dining room, with its tiled fireplace and bold flower-



Puffy European-style down comforters and carved wooden headboards distinguish the Alpenhof's

decorated corbels supporting the dark ceiling beams. The sound of polkas and Austrian folk and *Schulplattler* music fills the room.

The hotel's managers, Mark and Ann Johnson, host a welcoming party for guests each Monday during ski season, with a *dindl*-dressed employee serving *glühwein* and cheese fondue. Among the specialties served in the Alpenrose are *Wiener* and *Jäger Schmitzel*, *Wiener Rosnbraten*, *Bauern Platte* (assorted bratwurst and knochurst with sauerkraut), and *Jäger fondue* (bison and elk).

The Alpenhof offers at least two welcome modern touches—a computer room that also houses a boot-drying rack, and a superb outdoor Jacuzzi and heated swimming pool that looks up to the Jackson Hole clock tower and the new 100-passenger aerial tramway building under construction, replacing the original tram that shut down last winter.

During a stay of five nights at the



Owners Ed and Susan Cunningham have spent several million dollars to enrich the Alpenhof's Bavarian decor.

Alpenhof last winter, my wife and I one evening walked next door to the recently opened, deluxe Four Seasons resort to have a drink. The place is stunning...a massive sophisticated hotel, chock-a-block with millions of dollars of contemporary art. It would easily fit in Manhattan or Paris. But

at the bottom of a ski mountain? We happily retreated to the *gemütlich* surroundings of Alpenhof, comforted to know there are still such places for those of us who like our skiing the old-fashioned way. *

Staying at the Alpenhof

The Alpenhof offers a wide variety of accommodations, ranging from upstairs gable rooms to a Jungfrau room with fireplace and balcony. No guest room is exactly alike. During the winter high-season period, room rates range from \$199 to \$449 per night. Larger rooms carry a surcharge if occupied by more than two persons. The larger Edelweiss and Arlberg suites rent for up to \$579 a night. A generous buffet breakfast is included with guest accommodations. Contact: Alpenhof Lodge, 3255 West Village Drive, Box 288, Teton Village, Wyoming 83025, (800) 732-3244, www.alpenhoflodge.com.

'ID the Ski' Sparks New Exhibit at U.S. Hall of Fame

In the world of museums, it is called "visible storage." However, that often serves a purpose, as is the case of the new "ID the Ski" exhibition at the U.S. National Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame.

Volunteer curator Diane Darlington struck upon the idea while organizing a collection of an estimated 400 skis in the museum's storage room. Many are undocumented, as locals fell into the habit of casually dropping off skis when they had no further use for them.

They left a lot of gems. The oldest ski dates from 1800, although there are replicas of skis from much earlier times donated by the Ski Museum in Oslo. There are also many models of early Northland skis—Aristocrat, FIS, Imperial, and a special pair of 8'10" Tournaments to accommodate 6'5" Ron Jacobsen, a member of the U.S. Ski Jumping Team at the 1966 World University Games. They are not the longest in the collection. First place goes to one 11' 6" "prairie" ski from Red Wing, Minnesota, created by a skimaker identified only as Flavaad. In contrast are several pairs of Clif Taylor "shortee" skis. There are many pairs of Head skis, including those used by former Michigan Governor George Milliken. The Head collection also includes skis from former longtime National Ski Historian "Red" Carruthers, bootmaking pioneer Robert "Bunny"

Bass, and Fritz Mittelstadt, longtime nordic official for the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association.

Darlington hopes that many of their donors will return and share their stories. That is what happened when Lew Amundsen, from Farmington Hills, Michigan, dropped in and was happily reacquainted with his skis.

Although not remarkable, the skis illustrate incredible durability and the ingenuity of skiers who came to enjoy them over three generations. A Swedish gentleman gave them to Admundsen's mother when she was a young girl in the 1920s. She eventually married Lew's father, who not only loved her, but loved her skis. Lew's father used them for years, sliding across the fields of Michigan before retiring them to the family garage. Not long after, son Lew found them and used them from the 1940s until 1972.

With nearly 50 years of use, repairs and modifications took place. The holes carved out for the leather toe straps were filled with rubber, and metal toe bindings were screwed on. A broken leather heel strap was replaced with toilet chain. Pine tar, to hold wax, was applied at some point to the bases. While it may be tempting to restore these skis to their original glory, each adaptation tells a story and the joy they brought to a father and son. —J. Thomas West, President, U.S. National Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame and Museum

Nelson Bennett: A Life and Love for Skiing

BY TOM EASTMAN

Nelson Bennett is the rare 92-year-old who not only still skis, but still races, his last outing being at the Hannes Schneider Meister Cup at Mt. Cranmore, New Hampshire. He also splits and stacks 12 cords of wood every winter at his home in Washington State and, for a breather, re-shingled his roof this past summer.

"Now if you don't think that isn't a lot of exercise, I don't know what is," says the New Hampshire-raised 10th Mountain veteran and longtime ski area manager. "Sure I still race. It's important to stay active," says Bennett, who was raised on a farm where the necessity of hard work was the primary lesson. "Yes, there are days when I have to say to myself, 'Get your butt out of bed,' but you've got to keep doing the things you love to do—and keep your mind sharp."

Bennett's philosophy on life: "Bite off more than you can chew—then chew!"

Bennett's place in ski history is well secured. In the 1930s, he worked his first ski resort job at the pioneer eastern ski resort of Peckett's-on-Sugar Hill in Franconia, N.H., where he started as a "pot walloper" and was soon promoted to dining-room waiter. He moved west to the incomparably longer and steeper slopes of Sun Valley in the early 1940s, where he managed several departments, including the ski patrol, until 1960, with an interruption for service with the 10th's 87th Infantry Regiment.

In short, he embraced skiing as a way

of life. It's been that way ever since he first strapped on a pair of barrel staves growing up on his uncle's farm in Lancaster, New Hampshire.

He competed in high school racing, then went on to race for the University of New Hampshire in the four events

Sun Valley that summer. He was hired for the ski patrol and returned to Sun Valley to start work in December 1940. "I was on skis every day until April 10," he says. "I don't think I took a day off the slopes." He was eventually elevated to ski patrol director and then promoted to Sun Valley's summer recreation director.

War clouds steadily gathered on the horizon and, in 1942, some months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Bennett joined the 10th Mountain Training Group. By the time he had become Staff Sergeant in the 87th Infantry Regiment, Bennett had put through the 10th training course New Hampshire friends Herbert Schneider (son of legendary Hannes Schneider) from Mt. Cranmore and Toni Matt of 1939 Tuckerman Inferno fame.

They trained at Colorado's Camp Hale, high in the Rockies. They learned rock climbing, winter camping, and skiing warfare skills, often in brutal conditions. "Survival came easy after working the farm in New Hampshire," Bennett says.

He next trained at Camp Swift in the flatlands—and heat—of Texas. In December 1944, the

10th received the orders the men had awaited for nearly three years, and they were on the front lines in the valleys and mountains of Italy by January 20. The 10th made its mark as a fighting unit in its daring assault of northern Italy's Riva Ridge and Mount Belvedere in February 1945, driving out the Germans by climbing in the darkness of night.

Continued next page



Bennett readies for the 2007 Hannes Schneider Meister Cup at Mt. Cranmore, New Hampshire.

that were required of skiers at the time—cross-country, jumping, slalom, and downhill.

He graduated with a degree in civil engineering and forestry in June 1940, then headed west to survey with a lumber company in northern California. In October, he drove to Sun Valley, where he ran into fellow racer Dick Durrance, the great Dartmouth Olympian who had been working at

They engaged in the heaviest fighting in April as they pushed north across the Po Valley in the battle to drive the Germans out of Italy. Bennett never crossed the Po River—he was diagnosed with a perforated ulcer and was sent home. He did, however, return to pick the anniversary trail and fix the ropes for the 50th anniversary climb of Riva Ridge. The young soldiers from the modern 10th who accompanied the old veterans on their reunion complained about the pace that was being set by Bennett, then 80. “So I did finally get up Riva—and I did it three times!” says Bennett, adding, “Of course, I did it in daylight, and with no one shooting at us.”

After the war, along with many of the 10th veterans hooked on the skiing life, he returned to the mountains to pursue a career in the ski business. Bennett headed back to Sun Valley for another 15 years and, in 1960, he hired on as general manager at White Pass, Washington.

White Pass became the home of

the Mahre twins, whose father, Dave Mahre, was hired by Bennett, a smart move as Bennett remembers. “White Pass was in the middle of nowhere, and I had already gone through a few managers at that time because it was tough to get them to stick around. Some of my board members wanted to know why I hired a guy with eight kids, because we had to get a house for him. I told them, ‘Listen, a guy with eight kids isn’t going to be going anywhere any time fast.’ It was a good decision, and now some of Dave’s kids are involved with the area, so it has provided continuity.”

Bennett stayed at White Pass for 25 years. He mentored and taught racing early on to Phil and Steve Mahre, whose careers he gave a critical boost by hiring two French ski team aces to ski the pants off them. After that, the Mahres never looked back until both won Olympic medals in 1984.

Bennett managed the U.S. Olympic squad in 1956, and worked at the 1960

Squaw Valley Olympics, the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics, and the 1988 Calgary Olympics as a member of the Olympic ski patrol and in other capacities.

Of ski racing now vs. ski racing in his early days, he says, “As soon as sponsors and money came in with prizes and awards, the sport became a business.”

Bennett spends most of his “retirement” during the winter on the Masters circuit, often traveling with his good friend, former U.S. Ski Team member Madi Springer-Miller Kraus.

For Bennett, who was inducted into the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1986, skiing has been the only way to go, a life of tough mountain work and the satisfaction of living in the high country. “It’s been a good life,” says Bennett, never old, and still full of that New Hampshire farm-boy vigor. *

Tom Eastman, an award-winning ski journalist, is editor-at-large for the Mountain Ear newspaper in Conway, New Hampshire.

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Sugar Bowl's Silver Belt

BY SETH MASIA

In 1935, Austria's Hannes Schroll was, as far as American skiers were concerned, the fastest skier in the world. He had won Italy's Marmolata downhill in 1934 and headed to the U.S. to compete in the U.S. National Championship in the spring of 1935. On Washington's Mt. Rainier, he ran in the open (pro) class and won both the downhill and the slalom, beating Dick Durrance, who won the amateur class, in both races. Schroll ran the downhill in 2:35—more than a minute faster than Durrance.

Donn Tressider, head of the Yosemite Park & Curry Co., had seen Schroll race at Mamolata, was impressed by his daredevil style, and had hired Schroll to lead the Yosemite Ski School at California's Badger Pass for the 1935-36 season.

After a year in California, Schroll returned to Mt. Rainier in the spring to forerun the 1936 Silver Skis downhill. The winner, Hjalmar Hvam, took a shortcut over some rocky ground and fell but recovered. Schroll, however, posted a faster time. He was still, in the minds of Americans, the world's fastest skier.

Schroll returned to Yosemite, but at the end of the 1936-37 season, a fellow Austrian, Bill Klein, head of the ski school at the Sierra Club's Clare Tapaan Lodge in Donner Pass, guided Schroll over the immense snowpack to a concave bowl lying just one ridge away from the pass. Schroll quickly decided that this was a place where a ski area should be built—and that he should build it.

Schroll worked for one more season at Yosemite, but he quietly pushed his new project, describing his find to his wealthy Badger Pass

students, who were happy to invest in a new resort he called Sugar Bowl.

Schroll and his friends managed to raise \$750,000 in today's dollars from, among others, Jerome Hill, scion of the Great Northern Railroad family, and Hollywood's Walt Disney, an avid skier, came in for \$25,000 and the promise of having one of Sugar Bowl's two mountains named after him. Schroll had now become the first European to found an American ski resort.

Investors and friends in tow, Schroll began laying out trails on Sugar Bowl's Mt. Lincoln and Mt. Disney over the next winter. Construction began in the summer of 1939. By December, Sugar Bowl was set to open with a chairlift reaching two-thirds of the way toward the summit of Mt. Lincoln and a sumptuous three-story guest lodge.

On opening day, December 15, 1939, a small fleet of Ford station wagons equipped with half-tracks were positioned to haul visiting guests across a mile of meadow and woodland from the Southern Pacific's Norden train station in Donner Pass.

The season's first Sierra blizzard arrived on January 3, 1940. The cars



The Silver Belt course began at the top of Mt. Lincoln. Up to 100 racers descended 1,300 feet in a straight schuss down through a large gully and into a sheltered natural basin.

broke down and had to be replaced with horse-drawn hay sleds. As the snow drifted deeper, the horses floundered and were replaced with bulldozers.

The snow fell and fell and fell. Sugar Bowl is uniquely sited. The south side of Mt. Lincoln falls away 4,000 feet to Royal Gorge, a spectacular natural funnel carved by the American River. The Gorge scoops up storms rolling in from the Pacific and turns the wind to tumble right over Mt. Lincoln's summit. Sugar Bowl thus collects nearly 40 feet of snow in an average winter.

Despite its overabundance of snow, Sugar Bowl was a success by 1940 standards. The Southern Pacific carried 8,500 skiers to Sugar Bowl that

Sugar Bowl Resort



Sugar Bowl Resort

Peter Picard on course in 1940: "It was scary!"

first season. Before the season was over, Schroll wanted to hold an annual race to rival Sun Valley's already famous Harriman Cup, which had been running since 1937. The immense midwinter snowfalls meant it would be safe to plan a late spring event, when Schroll might entice the nation's best skiers for a season finale.

Schroll needed a name for the race. Traditional ski races awarded silver bowls and gold medals, but the Sierra gold camps had their own tradition.

At the first long-board championship race, held in 1867 at LaPorte in Sierra County, winner "Cornish Bob" Oliver of Sawpit Flat averaged 64 mph over a quarter-mile course and took home a silver belt worth \$75. Schroll decided to call his race the Silver Belt. He had the Shreve Company of San Francisco design a three-foot belt with silver studs and a silver buckle, a trophy to be held by the winner for a year.

If Sugar Bowl had ample snow, it didn't have a lot of vertical. The classic European downhill descended over 3,000 feet, but

Sugar Bowl's lodge sat just 1,500 feet below the summit of Mt. Lincoln. Schroll laid out the steepest, most challenging route from the summit. It dropped through a short couloir, then shot straight down a long gully, and out onto Steilhang, Sugar Bowl's steepest face. The total descent was just 1,300 feet, but it was the steepest race course in California.

The first course was set by Schroll with help from John Wiley of the Sugar Bowl Ski Club.

"The only way to get down Mt. Lincoln was through the gully," says Bill Klein, whom Schroll named as Sugar Bowl's ski school director in 1945. "Schroll didn't have much choice. You couldn't traverse too much."

As Klein remembers it, the first race was

extremely fast. "The original was short and steep, with only two gates on the Steilhang," he said. "There were two places you wanted to keep control, coming out of the chute at the top and at the entry to the Steilhang."

Peter Picard, a German anti-Nazi who had escaped Germany and was now instructing in Donner Pass, entered that first race and recalls, "It was scary! Straight down and then a right turn into the Steilhang and straight again."

Winners of that first race in 1940 were Friedl Pfeifer (winner of the 1936 Arlberg-Kandahar, he had escaped from the Nazis in Austria and arrived in the U.S. to coach the U.S. women's team) and Gretchen Kunigk (a Pfeifer protégé who later, as Gretchen Fraser, won America's first alpine Olympic medals in 1948). The following year, the surprise Silver Belt winner was J.C. "Chris" Schwarzenbach.

Picard remembers Schwarzenbach as a Swiss racer, but that's only because Schwarzenbach—an American from Long Island—had gone to school in Switzerland's Engadine and spoke fluent *Schweizerdeutsch* (the Swiss German dialect). Schwarzenbach had entered the 1938 Alpine World Championships in Engelberg, racing for the U.S. He returned to the States in 1940, bought the U.S. Propeller Co. in Los Angeles, which manufactured wood airplane propellers used in small planes at the time, and flew his own plane up to Truckee in the spring of 1941 to win the Silver Belt. Within a year, Schwarzenbach was making skis and bindings for the 10th Mountain Division under the U.S. Propeller label. Some years later, he served as president of the Far West Ski Association.

With the onset of World War II, there was no 1942 race. Sugar Bowl's chairlift closed after the Southern Pacific curtailed civilian travel to make room for the military, but the event was revived for the spring of 1946. More gates were set on the Steilhang



Sugar Bowl Resort

Winners Babette Hauelsen (at 25, the oldest woman to win the Silver Belt) and John Cress share the bubbly in 1955.

to turn it from a hairball downhill into a rhythmic GS. To climb to the top, racers sidestepped up the gully and couloir—it was the only surface preparation the course got.

The first post-war race was won by Alf Engen and Canada's Rhoda Wurtele. Several great American racers competed. Among those taking their first Silver Belt wins in the years that followed were George Macomber (1948), Dodie Post (1949), Sally Neidlinger (1951), Janette Burr (1953), Bill Beck (1955), Sally Deaver (1956), Starr Walton (1957), Buddy Werner and Linda Meyers (1959), Tom Corcoran (1960), Chuck Ferries (1961), Jean Saubert (1963), Marilyn Cochran (1968), Rick Chaffee (1968), and Barbara Cochran (1969). Janette Burr was the only one to win three times and retire the belt.

The lift to the Mt. Lincoln summit was built in 1957, and the course changed a bit. Now it dropped through the Silver Belt couloir, made a sharp right turn, and turned into a GS through the woods and back into the gully. A photo from the era shows 14 gates set on the Steilhang, with deep ruts in the soft spring snow.

By 1960, the race had lost its reputation as an intimidating sprint downhill. Racers coming off Europe's icy, dangerous, classic Alpine courses found the soft-snow Silver Belt GS an easy, undulating pleasure.

"The Silver Belt was always a fun time," recalls Billy Kidd, who began making the spring pilgrimage in 1962. "Sugar Bowl had the best corn snow, like spring at Stowe but months of it. The course wound down through the Ponderosa pines, and you could smell them."

Kidd is a little unclear on some of the details, because putting the world's best racers together in the intimate Sugar Bowl Lodge at the tail end of the season led to a certain level of partying. "We were there with the French guys," he says. "It

was Ferries and Heuga and Marolt and Killy and Lacroix and me. Of course we had to do some research on the South Lake Tahoe gambling scene, and we just made it back in time for the race in the morning."

"The snow softened up in the spring, so they had to run the race at 9 or 10 in the morning," Chuck Ferries says. "It was a great race, a fast GS. It was so much fun because the season was over and the Sugar Bowl folks made us feel special and wanted."

Scott Henderson, the Canadian downhiller who won his Silver Belt about the time the World Cup circuit got started, remembers, "A lot of snow, always a lot of snow. It was a fun race in powdery western snow, and it always ruttet out early. We were lucky to run in the first seed." With the launch of the World Cup, the Europeans began to lose interest in an April race in California. "So it was the Canadians and Americans hanging out together," Henderson says.

Sugar Bowl didn't have the lodging—or the vertical—to host a World Cup race, and after 1967 the field began to resemble that of a North American national champion-

ship. The race skipped the years 1972-1974, then was revived for the last "classic" Silver Belt. Held in 1975, it was won by Americans Cindy Nelson and Greg Jones.

The Silver Belt was revived



The visionary. Hannes Schroll, with hat, on his way to downhill victory on Mt. Rainier, 1935.

Sugar Bowl Resort

in shortened form one more time, for Sugar Bowl's 50th Anniversary in 1989-90. Instead of a field of international stars, invitations went out to local ex-racers, veteran ski instructors, and VIPs. True to tradition, it stormed for the race, a howling Sierra blizzard that turned the summit couloir into a blind alley. Racers brailed out of the chute into a hard traverse over to the trees, where visibility improved and the wind abated. The lovely, big GS turns led to a finish line at the brand new mid-mountain lodge.

It was the end of a classic American race tradition. *



Billy Kidd bullets off the top of the Silver Belt course in 1965.

Sugar Bowl Resort

From Rock Carvings to Carving Skis

That hunters were the first to use skis should come as no surprise. What is remarkable is that modern ski design—camber, twin tips, waisted sidecuts—may be rooted in shapes that were conceived more than 3,500 years ago.

By Oivind Kulberg

The discovery of skis and ski fragments, particularly in Scandinavia and northern Russia, show that skiing goes back more than 6,000 years to the Stone Age. Chinese authorities recently claimed they have found 10,000- to 20,000-year-old cave paintings of skiers.

In Norway, the oldest depiction of a skier is a rock carving at Bola, Snåsa, in central Norway. It is nearly 6,000 years old, which means that it was carved nearly a thousand years before the First Dynasty of Egyptian civilization. There is reason to believe that skis were vital for survival in areas of northern Europe and Asia, but so far nobody really knows what urged man to form "boards" into skis, nor when it happened.

It is highly probable that the first man to use skis was a hunter, who felt the need to travel faster and with less effort over snow than what was possible with snowshoes, which are presumed to have preceded skis. Using snowshoes was a slow means of locomotion, while a hunter on skis, prowling when snow conditions were favorable for skiing, but not for the running animal, would be able to catch up with or exhaust his prey.

About 4,500 years ago, a man in Rodoy, in northern Norway, bent over a smooth rock surface and made a rock carving which was to become a model for pictograms used in the 1994 Olympic Winter Games at Lillehammer, Norway. The carving is still intact. There is no telling what passed through the artist's mind as he was scratching this design into the rock, but despite the fact that rock carvings are a matter of interpretation, there is

every reason to believe that this depiction was meant to represent a skier, and not, as has also been suggested, a man paddling a boat.

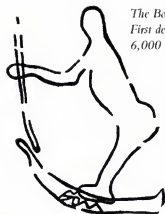
The carving presents a number of interesting and surprising features. The "skis" seem to be slightly cambered (arched), just like a modern ski, to distribute weight evenly along the length of the ski. Would a primitive man draw a boat with a concave keel? The skis are extremely long compared to the stature of the skier, who

is short and provided with rather long "ears." In his hands the "skier" holds what might seem to be a very clumsy ski pole. (And hardly a very effective paddle, for that matter).

Since I am not an expert on rock carvings, and since even experts disagree, I feel at liberty to speculate on a possible interpretation of this carving, usually referred to as the "Rodoy Man."

The carving seems to represent a skier hunting reindeer. In his hands he holds not a ski pole but a an axe. For camouflage, he has attached small reindeer antlers or a hare's ears to his head. He finds shelter at the top of a steep snow-covered hill, while his helpers drive a flock of reindeer in the direction of the slope. As soon as the animals start running downhill, he sets out after them, and since his skis are so long and well made, and since his crouching silhouette will appear to the running animals ahead of him as a harmless calf or a hare, he will be able to catch up with them, wounding or slaying his prey with his Stone Age axe. His helpers, following him, will kill the wounded animals.

There is no doubt that skiing was common in this



*The Bola Skier:
First depiction of skis
6,000 years ago.*



Alta Skier (left), discovered in Norway, is believed to be 3,000 years old. Older yet is the "Rodoy Man" (below), also found in Norway and dating to 2500 B.C. Note what appears to be bottom camber in their skis.



area 5,000 years ago, a fact suggested by the uncovering at Drevja in 1959 of the oldest preserved ski in Norway (3343-2939 B.C.). Drevja is approximately 80 kilometers (50 miles) northeast of the Rodoy carving.

The fact that skis were used for hunting is well established in other rock carvings at Alta, Norway, and Bessov-Noss, Russia, where both the skiing hunter and the game being pursued are depicted in the same rock carving. In contrast to the Rodoy Man, the Alta hunter is supplied with very short skis and holds a bow in his hands.

The Alta skier looks very much like today's ski skaters, who use short skis and are able to achieve considerable speed even climbing uphill. Like the skis of the Rodoy Man, these short skis also appear to have camber. Possibly on crust snow in the wide, open plains near Alta, a skiing hunter was able to approach his game by ski skating. The hunter would naturally choose favorable conditions, when the snow crust was strong enough to support the skier but not the animal.

A rock carving discovered in Bessov-Noss, (right), may show a moose hunter trying to fasten a clamp trap to the legs of an exhausted animal. An interesting feature of this carving is the fact that the hunter's skis, like those of the Rodoy Man, have "twin tips" a swan-throat-fashioned tip in front and upturned heels. According to a March 15, 2006 report in the *Christian Science Monitor*, skiing hunters in the Altay Mountains of Mongolia even today "track elk for days in deep snow, and capture them live." Thanks to skis, tracking, exhausting, and transporting animals was much easier during the winter season, and keeping the animals in captivity would secure fresh meat throughout the year.

Two Poles or One?

Particularly interesting is the rock carving at Zala-vruga, Russia (page 36), in which a detailed hunting story is told in a single engraving. We see the tracks of both hunters and animals leading to the point where three skiers have caught up with the animals, which are wounded and possibly exhausted by running in heavy snow. In certain stretches, probably uphill or level, we see traces of separate short skis with prints of pole discs or baskets on either side (skiing hunters of the time mounted discs or baskets both on spears and bows for combined use as a weapon and ski pole), while in other stretches, presumably downhill, ski tracks appear as two continuous lines without or with few disc prints.

It is surprising that this rock carving may prove that skiers 3,500 years ago used two ski poles for balance or to increase speed in uphill and level areas. The change from one pole to two poles in skiing is generally considered to have occurred much later.

As for rock carving depictions of skiers in general, it is interesting to note the great variety of lengths and types

of skis, varying with the lay of the land, the consistency of the snow, and the method of hunting. The importance of using skis adapted to local snow conditions was clearly in evidence when, in the 1990s, Norwegian scientist Olav Hjeljord was studying wildlife in the remote, roadless *taiga* forests at the source of the Petchora River in northern Ural, Russia. On his first visit to the area, he quickly discovered that his Norwegian skis were of no use, since they sank to the ground in the powdery snow, which, due to exceptionally low temperature during the winter, usually prevails until spring. He had a local skivright make him a pair of the broad, skin-clad skis similar to the ones which may have been used for the last 1,000 years in the area.

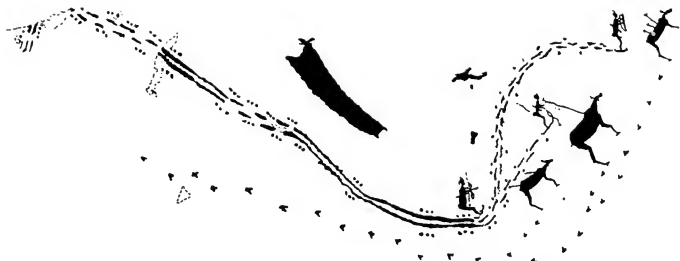
Most skis used during the Stone and Bronze Ages appear to have been fairly broad and short, but above the tree-line there was need for a different type of ski. On firm, wind-



Rock carving from Bessov-Noss, Russia, shows skier/hunter with trap in pursuit of a moose.

carved snow, a short and stiff ski will not perform well, while a longer, narrow, and more flexible ski will "float" over the crested waves, particularly if it is cambered. Skiers in northern Scandinavia and Russia, where large parts of the population were dependent on swift long-distance skis to hunt and later to herd reindeer in wide, open mountain plateaus, are likely to have felt the need for a longer and more pliant ski. An early description of such skis was given by the Italian clergyman Francesco Negri, who visited northern Sweden in 1660 and referred to the skis he saw, according to Roland Huntford's book *To Planker og en lidenskap* (Two Planks and a Passion), as "two slender planks... six feet long," which "they never lifted from the snow, but let them glide softly forwards."

In her book *På Ski I Norge* (On Skis In Norway), historian Karin Berg has shown how such skis, also called "Finn skis," were used in Finnmark, Norway. This is probably the archetype of the ski which, by trial and error over centuries, was gradually adapted to the widely varying local climatic and topographic conditions of the country, ending up in the 19th century as the multi-purpose Telemark ski. One might also ask why fairly long and narrow skis gained popularity even in



Rock carving of hunters on skis, Savalunga, Russia (2000-1500 B.C.) Did skiers use two ski poles 3,500 years ago?

the forest areas of Norway. The answer may be that the proximity of the country to the Norwegian Sea and the Gulf Stream normally brought spells of thaw during the winter with subsequent packing of snow.

As useful as they were for hunting and trapping, skis were also an indispensable means of transportation and communication in many areas. It is doubtful whether man would have been able to survive in inland parts of Scandinavia, Russia, and Asia if he had to rely on snowshoes alone for survival.

The lack of rock carvings or early written descriptions of skiers in snow-rich areas of North America may be regarded as a puzzle in cultural history. As for the northern area of the continent, part of the explanation may be the fact that, for hunting, the kayak and, for locomotion, dog teams had reached such perfection that skis were less necessary.

Skiing Arrives Late in the Alps

In Europe, skiing was largely restricted to the northern regions. Even in the Alps, skis were practically unknown as late as 1840 A.D., despite the fact that many villages must have been isolated and many mountain passes snowbound during parts of the winter. As a curiosity, ski historian Jacob Vaage notes in his book *Norske Ski erobrer Verden* (Norwegian Skis Conquer the World) the fact that snowbound monks in Switzerland's Saint Bernhard Pass Monastery saw skis for the first time in 1883 and subsequently acquired 12 pairs.

In addition to what we know about the development of skiing from rock carvings and preserved skis, there are also early written references to skiing in Latin, Chinese, Persian, Russian, and the Scandinavian languages. In Nordic mythology "Ullr" was the god and "Skade" the goddess of skiing. In *Kongesagaer* (The Saga of Kings), describing life in Norway during the period 800-1200 A.D., Snorre Sturlason states that legendary King Visburs named his first son "Gisl" (ski pole) and his second son

"Ondur" (ski). Sturlason also records the words of Queen Gunhild, who in the year 920 A.D. expressed the view that "the Sami people are such good skiers that no animal can escape them." In *Edda* (tales and heroic poetry) King Harald Hardråde (865-933 A.D.), who was envious of Young Heming's reputation as the best skier in the country, is said to have challenged him to a race on skis down a steep mountain to see who dared to stop nearest to the precipice. Of the famous Viking Einar Tambarskjelve, it is simply stated that he was "an excellent skier like all other good men," a statement which indicates the widespread use of skis in Scandinavia at the time.

The book *Kongespeilet* (The King's Mirror), which appeared in Norway in 1250 A.D., describes how a good skier going down steep hills could catch up with and "stab nine reindeer with his spear in one downhill race." The fact that "catching up" skiing was a common method of hunting in 1250 A.D. may support the interpretation of the Rodoy Man as a skier. The efficiency of skis in hunting is also well substantiated by the fact that in 1276 A.D. the reigning King of Norway—"King Magnus the Law Mender"—established a law that "moose should have peace from those who hunt on skis." In deep snow, the heavy moose was at the mercy of the skiing hunter, and there was danger of the moose population therefore becoming extinct. (King Magnus' decree was likely the first example of a Norwegian law for the protection of a species).

In 1307 the Persian writer Fadl Allah Rashid du-Din describes skiing hunters in the Altay mountains of Mongolia: "They make boards out of wood, ... they fasten them on their feet with straps, take a staff in their hand, press this staff against the ground, so that they glide on the upper surface of the snow... The booty of their hunt they lay on a sled, which they draw after them." To stress the superiority of the skilled skier, he claims that "those experienced on 'wooden boards' can run circles around the inexperienced ones, especially on steep slopes and

fast running.” This is a description of such advanced skiing that the inference of a very long period of previous development is inescapable. In fact, skiing may have originated in this area. In his 1555 book *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern People) the Swedish bishop Olaus Magnus also describes the very advanced stage of skiing in northern areas of Scandinavia and observes female hunters on skis, carrying bow and arrows.

During the 17th and 18th centuries there is reason to believe that Norway played an important part in the development of skis and skiing technique since, for purposes of defense, authorities began organizing ski competitions with rich prizes—some corresponding at the time to the value of one horse and two cows—so these prizes must have seemed extremely attractive to any prospective ski trooper. The advantages and disadvantages of different types of skis, bindings, and ski poles were actively discussed in military circles. Most companies seem to have used one long ski for gliding and a short one with fur fastened to the bottom for kicking off, but eventually ski troopers were allowed to employ the type of skis they were accustomed to at home, and gradually skis of equal length became dominant in both military and civilian skiing.

Twin-Tip Skis in the Eighteenth Century

Another subject of debate was the use of twin-tip skis. In 1761 Major J. F. Blix claimed that twin-tip skis were preferable for three reasons: “They adapt more easily to bumpy snow, they allow withdrawal of lines still facing the enemy, and in case of a broken tip, the ski can simply be turned around.” However, the twin-tip ski was not a novelty at that time. A number of rock carvings show how twin-tip skis were used in the past. The Bola Skier is shown on skis with upturned tips and tails, and the Besov-Noss carving also shows a Stone Age hunter on twin-tip skis.

Most prehistoric and Middle Age skis appear to have been either parallel or tapering off in width from the tip toward the heel. But at some point, likely in the early 1600s, an ingenious ski maker must have discovered the fact that a skier could make turns much more easily if his skis were broadest just behind the tip, tapered off towards the binding, and broadened a bit towards the heel of the ski—a design referred to as waisting, or sidecut, today. (Such a design was noted in the mid-1600s by Ole Worms of Denmark, who had traveled widely in Norway and had acquired skis for his museum in Copenhagen.) Edging of such an inward-curving ski simply initiated and facilitated a change of direction. The so-called “waistline” ski had been invented, and the shape is still the standard for most touring, slalom, and downhill skis. It made pos-

sible a revolution in skiing technique.

We know little about where and when waisted skis were developed, but it is a fact that the legendary Sondre Norheim and his fellow skiers were making graceful turns and jumps on skis of this design around 1860 in the isolated Telemark community of Morgedal. Norheim has been given credit for inventing “waistline” skis, but such skis were, as noted above, already described and illustrated two centuries earlier. In the end,



A Nimedal, Norway, skinner at work. (Painting by Jacob Gloersen Ulrik, 1903).

Norheim did not invent “waistline” skis, but he may have been one of the first skiers to take advantage of these skis to execute elegant Telemark and Christiania turns. And he was certainly dominant in demonstrating the efficiency of these turns to Norwegian skiers. *

The author, who lives in Kongsberg, Norway, was arrested in 1941 as a youth by the German Gestapo for publishing an anti-Nazi newspaper, released in 1942, and joined Norway's underground army in 1944. Following World War II, he became a broadcaster for the BBC in London. A graduate of the University of Oslo with a masters degree from the University of Wisconsin, he was a lecturer in languages at the Kongsberg Gymnas from 1950 to 1987, is co-author of a book on glacier survival and rescue techniques, and has written several articles on mountaineering history.

Campgaw Mt.: Launching Missiles—and Skiers



A 1955 Cold War nuclear deterrent site is turned into a cold-weather incubator for New Jersey skiers.

By Barry Jay Warsch

Campgaw Mountain, located only 18 miles from the George Washington Bridge, is the closest ski area to New York City. Although the “mountain” rises a mere 719 feet above its base in suburban Mahwah, New Jersey, the Manhattan skyline is still visible from Campgaw’s summit.

Skiers haven’t been the only objects launched at this New Jersey ski area. It was once a missile site designed to intercept nuclear warheads aimed at New York City.

In the days of the Cold War between the United States and the former U.S.S.R., New York City—America’s center of population, finance, and industry—was a primary Russian target. To answer the threat, the U.S. deployed radar-guided land, sea, and air-based anti-aircraft guns and missiles. The most widely relied upon weapon in this defensive arsenal was the U.S. Army’s Nike anti-aircraft missile, deployed as the first surface-to-air missile system in the world.

Donald E. Bender, prominent New Jersey-based Cold War military historian, studied the era extensively: “The Campgaw Mountain missile

site was one of many designed to protect the metro area during the early years of the Cold War. The location for the site was based on distance from the geographical cen-



Representative of Campgaw’s nuclear arsenal were these 1950s Nike missiles—Ajax (left) and Hercules (right).

ter of Manhattan,” assumed to be the center of Central Park for defensive military purposes. “Sites were established in a ring 25 to 30 miles from Central Park. The sites were spaced more or less evenly with regard to

adjacent missile sites so as to offer a defensive shield with overlapping fields of fire.”

The U.S. Army missile site opened on Campgaw Mountain in 1955, the northernmost installation in this defensive ring of fire. The missile base’s “Control Area,” with radar towers, screens, and early-generation computers, was on top of the mountain, providing unobstructed radar coverage of the area, as well as a view of the Manhattan skyline in the distance. The missiles, each over 35 feet long and weighing well over a ton, were stored in underground concrete bunkers below the north slope of the mountain, in the “Launcher Area.”

“The early missiles were Nike Ajax,” says Bender. “These conventionally armed surface-to-air missiles had about a 28-mile range. Later, the site had the big Nike Hercules missiles, with a 90-mile range and atomic warheads.”

The base also contained barracks, electrical generators, recreational facilities, and family housing. It was surrounded by barbed-wire fences, and patrolled by armed military police with dogs. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, according to Bender, Camp-

gaw Mountain's missiles were on full alert, elevated on their launchers and ready to fire. It was during this time that Bergen County cleared a trail and built a rope tow downhill from the Control Area on adjacent county-owned land. Opened in 1962, the slope was within a few minutes' stroll of the base's armed and ready nuclear missiles.

By the late 1960s, Soviet technology exceeded the missiles' defensive capabilities. America's nuclear-deterrent strategy switched from national defense to "mutual assured destruction" (a policy to attack anyone who attacked us). The Vietnam War sapped support for military spending, and the Nike systems became redundant. As a result, there were phased closings of Nike sites nationwide. In 1971, the missile battery on Campgaw Mountain was closed. The land was transferred by the U.S. Army to Bergen

County after the base closing with the provision that it be used as a park. The ski area was expanded into the abandoned Army base.

Today, the Launcher Area is the site of a tony suburban housing development. The Control Area's surviving buildings are used as offices, stables, and tack rooms by the Saddle Ridge Riding Area. And the rest of the mountain is the home of Campgaw Mountain ski area, owned by the Bergen County Park System and privately operated by county concessionaire Ski Campgaw Management LLC.

Small by any standards, Campgaw's 15 skiable acres and 269 vertical feet contain eight trails (the longest is 600 feet) with 100 percent snowmaking, night skiing, tubing, a terrain park, two double chairs and three surface lifts. Weather permitting, snowmaking starts after

Thanksgiving, and the area remains open from mid-December to mid-March.

Clearly for beginners and intermediates, Campgaw caters to northern New Jersey skiers. Corie Stone, general manager, knows her customers. "We get families from the surrounding areas of Bergen County, with children of all ages. They take their children to Campgaw to learn or practice, before heading off to Vermont or some other vacation resort."

Today, the only Nikes at Campgaw are après-ski footwear. But in more precarious times, Campgaw Mountain, one of the small number of the northeast's surviving lulluputian ski hills, played an integral part in the world's nuclear madness.

Barry Jay Warsch is a Miami attorney and freelance ski and travel writer.

Website Grows in Traffic, Capability

ISHA's website (www.skiinghistory.org) set a record for Winter 2005-2006 with 284,000 visits, thanks largely to interest in the Torino Winter Olympics and Olympics history. We expected traffic to level off this past winter, but it didn't—it grew another 40 percent. And by the time we close our fiscal year at the end of June, we forecast more than 450,000 website visits.

Skiinghistory.org is an important part of ISHA's public outreach effort. A big part of our traffic comes from students, who find us through Google and other search engines while working on term papers about the history of snowsports. Once at skiinghistory.org, a researcher can conduct a text search using the search box at the upper left corner of the home page—or simply follow the directions found at <http://skiinghistory.org/howtosearch.html>.

ISHA's website is also an important online resource for people seeking information on skiing at Wikipedia, the

popular on-line, user-created encyclopedia. This means that we're now reaching a much wider and younger audience than SKIING HERITAGE currently serves—a hopeful trend for ISHA's future.

We've taken advantage of the growing traffic by putting a subscription function on skiinghistory.org. You can now subscribe to SKIING HERITAGE right online (go to <http://skiinghistory.org/subscribe.html>). This is a very clean and efficient way to subscribe, or to renew a subscription. Credit-card payments are processed through Google, which saves ISHA money: ISHA realizes more revenue when you subscribe online than if your order is taken by mail, phone, or fax—so when your subscription comes due for renewal, we encourage you to renew through our website.

ISHA's website also acquired its first advertiser recently: Vintage Ski World in Aspen now has a small ad on the

homepage (<http://skiinghistory.org>), and if you click it you'll go to the Vintage Ski World website. There you can order posters and gifts—and ISHA earns a generous commission on each purchase you make.

Another new feature is video content. Go to <http://skiinghistory.org/video.html> to view ISHA's new promotional video *Preserving Skiing Heritage: The Story of ISHA*. It includes nostalgic old-time ski footage, interviews with skiing legends and former champions, and describes through the words of ISHA members the mission, goals, and benefits of belonging to ISHA.

Visit skiinghistory.org regularly. New content and new features are constantly being introduced.

—Seth Masia, Webmaster



The Rear-Entry Boot: A Life Cut Short

BY SETH MASIA

Since the adoption of the Kandahar binding in the early 1930s, alpine skiers have had a love-hate relationship with their increasingly stiffer boots. Even today, many skiers struggle to get their feet in and out of their boots, especially when the plastic is stiff with cold.

Fifty and more years ago, the complaint was different. Leather boots aged quickly, losing their edging power after a hundred or so days of hard skiing. In deep and wet snow they grew soggy and cold. The semi-flexible leather midsoles were a lousy mechanical mate for cable bindings, and were even worse when release bindings became popular right after World War II. About the only thing leather boots had going for them is that they could be broken in, like a baseball glove, comfortably

assuming the shape of the skier's foot.

When Bob Lange introduced the first commercially successful plastic boot in 1964, it cured all the things that were wrong with leather boots—and also obviated what leather boots were good at. The original Lange did not assume the shape of the skier's foot. In fact, it often drew blood. I well recall that my own early Langes dug painful divots in the fronts of my ankle knobs.

A big part of the problem with the plastic boot was "shin bang." In leaning forward to start a turn, the skier pressed the shin against the sharp top edge of the unyielding plastic cuff. Bootmakers hadn't yet figured out how to make an inner-boot tongue that would efficiently and comfortably cushion that pressure. Boot-top fractures were called "Lange bangs,"

and skiers who didn't break their tibia often bruised it.

A number of innovators took on the problem. Peter Kennedy and Mel Dalebout experimented, successfully, with custom-foamed inner boots. Sven Coomer, working for Nordica, developed a removable leather liner that mimicked the break-it-in function of the old leather boot. Alden Hanson, Sr. invented "Flo-fit," a semi-fluid plastic, similar to Silly Putty, that molded to the shape of the foot. Dan Post patented a design that eliminated the shin-crossing edge by moving it all the way to the patellar tendon, just below the knee. Dan Canfield at Rosemount created a side-entry fiberglass boot elaborately cushioned with pillows of hollow, insulating beads—and the boot also incorporated a deeply padded, articulated tongue that would prove to be 15 years ahead of its time.

Hanson Hatched

Another designer figured out a way to eliminate the tongue altogether. Alden Hanson's son Chris conceived it. Back in 1958, when Alden was first experimenting with Flo-fit and Chris was in junior high school, Chris built a fiberglass hood attached to a leather boot sole via a hinge at the toe. The inner boot was cushioned with Flo-fit, arranged in a bladder that fit over the instep and across the front of the shin as a single sheet—a sort of saddle-blanket for the foot. It was crude—the hood was fastened down with a leather longthong strap, and Chris built only a single boot rather than a full pair—but it worked. By 1967, the problems of plastic boots



Rear-entry parade (left to right): K2 Three, O'Brien prototype, Scott, Rosemount Alpha. (Bottom) Hanson Riva Soft.

had grown so obvious that Chris and his brother Denny (Alden Hanson, Jr.) began to think about putting the tongueless boot into production.

The brothers were working for Lange at the time—Alden Sr. had sold an exclusive license on Flo-fit to Bob Lange. By 1969, the Hansons had left Lange and began building prototypes for a rear-entry boot. They launched their new company in June 1970 and had a skiable boot on the snow that fall. They signed K2 to distribute the boot and displayed it at the Ski Industries America Trade Show in March.

Design Simplicity

Chris and his mold-making team settled on an elegantly simple design. The shell was injection-molded in two halves, like the fuselage of a plastic model airplane, so it would pop out of the mold easily (overlap-style, four-buckle boots had to be laboriously pried out of very complex molds). The back of the boot, designed like a rear door, also formed the highback spoiler, and in some models a pivoted front cuff guarded the shin from shell-top pressure. The inner boot was a simple, thick foam sock, molded in one shot. Fit was adjusted by pumping warm wax into a rubber bladder that lay, saddle-like, over the top of the inner boot. So there were only five plastic parts, the bladder, and a couple of cable buckles to close the back of the boot—half as many parts as on a four-buckle boot with a sewn liner.

"The fit system is what made it workable," Denny Hanson said recently. "The system needed to adjust to the width and height of the instep. It had to be something non-compressible because if it compresses, the foot moves, and then when you make the boot tight enough for control it makes for circulation problems in the foot." Most important, the fit system also had to be simple for shops to use. And if there was one thing ski shops already understood, it was hot wax.

In the fall of 1971, the factory in Boulder shipped 2,500 pairs to ski

shops. Skiers loved the convenience of being able to slip into and out of their boots quickly and more easily—and the comfort. "By 1975, we were contending for Number One in the upper-price ranges," Denny remembers.

Hanson's success bred competition. Fran Franet created the simple, lightweight, close-fitting Scott boot, much appreciated by freestyle competitors. K2 introduced its own rear-entry boot, and so did Olin. The O'Brien water ski company introduced a rear-entry boot. Nordica's rear-entry designs came to dominate the low-end price ranges.

None of these products put much of a dent in Hanson's high-end business. During the period 1978 to 1982, Hanson's peak years, the factory shipped upwards of 120,000 pairs annually, worldwide. Denny Hanson estimates the company was responsible for about half the dollar value of the high-end boot market in the U.S.

But financing was a problem. Hanson had to borrow as much as \$6 million each spring to pay for production, against the hope that all their dealers would be able to pay the bills the following December. And by 1980, interest rates had soared to 22 percent. The Hansons looked for a European factory to buy. "But I was 35 years old and not savvy about international finance," Denny says. "And we were provincial and paranoid about our intellectual property. We didn't want to teach some European engineers how we did things. And we would have had to raise a lot more capital. We never had enough capital."

The winter of 1982-83 saw thin snow in the U.S., and many dealers couldn't pay their bills. Hanson ran onto the rocks, and in 1984 the company was sold to Daiwa, its Japanese

Hanson presents flexibility. More or less.

You're looking at two different boots.
This boot with a super flexible shell can either soften like a marshmallow or stiffen like a rock (it's yours to choose). It's yours to choose the flex (the way the boot reacts to your movements) to suit your requirements.
The other boot is the Hanson Riva, a sturdy, stable boot shell designed for the aggressive intermediate-to-expert skier.
Both boots feature the adjustable front flex bar which can be moved to give you more flex, or even to give you forward flex.
Lateral flex comes from the shock absorber in the center of the heel. You can change the shock absorber to give you more or less lateral flex.
And lateral flexing with an overpronated foot doesn't hurt. You'll probably like that.
Hanson boots are made to last. Better for you than the other. Try them both at your local dealer. You won't be able to tell the difference.

HANSON

Besides ease of fit, the Hanson Riva also offered simplicity of flex adjustment. You simply moved the clip at the front of the boot up or down to stiffen or soften flex.

distributor, which began a rapid retreat from the U.S. and European markets (the Hanson brand lives on in Japan).

Salomon and the SX-90

By this time, the company had some serious competition in the rear-entry boot business. Salomon had begun studying the boot market in 1974, and in 1979 made a half-hearted foray with a rear-entry high performance boot called the SX-90. Like the Hanson, it had a molded one-piece foam inner boot and a rear-door closure. Other than that, it couldn't be more different. Salomon's idea was to separate the fit function from the flex and performance functions. To do that, they built something that resembles today's snowboard bindings, and put a weatherproof box around it. There was an adjustable strap over the instep, and another adjustable strap around the metatarsal. Salomon was a binding company and liked mechanical solutions. The result was a complex machine with dozens of parts—cables, screws, levers, knobs—and a very stiff, mechanical

feel. No one was impressed. Over the first two years, the company shipped fewer than 30,000 pairs.

But Georges Salomon, himself a recreational skier, believed in the convenience and comfort of the rear-entry concept. Besides, he argued, Hanson was a more vulnerable target than the established Italian factories—including Lange, Caber, and Tecnica—still dedicated to making four-buckle overlap race boots. So Salomon's engineers fixed the design flaws. In the fall of 1983, the company introduced the SX91, using a more foot-shaped shell and a simple, effective flex control system using a sliding stop easily reachable on the side of the boot. It was an instant success. Dealers were hungry for a workable replacement for the fast-fading Hanson, and the SX91 filled the bill. "If we'd had 400,000 pairs we could have sold them all," recalls Jackson Hogen, then Salomon's U.S. product manager.

The other successful rear-entry design was Raichle's Flexon Viva for women. A flexibly ribbed hood over the instep and shin controlled the boot's action, and it had a comfortable, sewn inner boot. This, combined with its light weight and ease of rear entry, made it one of the world's most popular women's boots. By 1987, according to Dave Bertoni, Salomon's boot product manager in the late 1980s, rear-entry boots from Raichle, Salomon, and Nordica, accounted for more than 80 percent of ski boot sales worldwide.

Racers Unimpressed

But racers never much liked rear-entry boots. The extra space between the foot and the shell, occupied by a network of cables and bands, simply provided room for a powerful foot to roll around. Salomon's technical staff worked hard to make the boots work for their stable of world-class racers. The typical solution was to downsize by two sizes, rip out all the fitting mechanisms, and squeeze in some

kind of custom-foamed innerboot. This was a labor-intensive process that did nothing to build confidence in the consumer product. Meanwhile, top racers like the Mahre brothers, Ingemar Stenmark, Tamara McKinney, Cindy Nelson, and Franz Klammer stuck with their traditional four-buckle overlap Langes, Cabers, Nordicas, and Dynafits. The marketing message these companies projected—Lange the most aggressively, soon backed up by a resurgent Tecnica—was that rear-entry boots were for beginners. If you wanted to improve as a skier, they claimed, you needed an overlap shell that would snug around your foot for optimum control. Performance skiers, including a lot of influential ski instructors, bought into the concept.

The real performance issue for racers was more subtle, according to Dave Bertoni. "The killer was energy absorption," he says. The way the flaps of a four-buckle boot overlapped provided the friction to absorb shock, especially the high-frequency shocks experienced on an icy race course. A rear-entry boot, with its simpler shell, felt too lively and reactive to a racer going full-tilt.

The other issue at Salomon was manufacturing cost. Every high-end rear-entry boot contained dozens of internal parts. "Our technology wasn't inexpensive," Bertoni says. "Salomon tried to be more industrial and less labor-intensive [than the Italian factories].

But this isn't an industrial-scale business. An Italian factory could get several dozen liners sewn up in Romania for less than it cost us just to build the mold for our liner. The Italian factories had access to a bazaar of standard boot parts in Montebelluna. But everything we did was unique, and we had to make it ourselves. The further we drew away from traditional technology, the more we became entirely self-dependent for components."

And overlap boots improved, especially after Tecnica created its Explosion series, a top-notch overlap race boot that was actually comfortable. "In the early days, we owned the high-end market," said Bertoni. "When performance skiers stampeded to the new generation of overlaps, they took the boot line's profitability with them. All the margin is in the high-performance product."

Mid-Entry Hybrids Flop

By 1990, the writing was on the wall, and Salomon decided to build a four-buckle race boot. The result was the Integral, introduced in 1991 under the endorsement of ski racing phenom Ingemar Stenmark, recently retired from the World Cup circuit. The Integral was a hybrid, or mid-entry boot, with an overlap lower shell to snug down around the foot and a cuff designed to yawn wide by flipping aft for entry and exit. Like a dozen other mid-entry designs from other manufacturers, it was an inelegant solution, with far too much bulk around the ankle and hinge areas. Hybrids, the Integral included, never caught on. To build a true overlap boot more cheaply, Salomon simply bought the Italian San Giorgio factory and introduced the Course series, an instant success.

Meanwhile, after a disastrous corporate reorganization, Raichle simply evaporated in 1992, the Viva disappeared from the market—and the era of the rear-entry boot, along with the convenience and comfort it brought to legions of recreational skiers, ended. *



Ski Advocates, Journalist, Olympian, Resort Pioneer



DICK GOETZMAN
U.S. Ski Association,
U.S. Ski Hall of Fame
President

Dick Goetzman, for decades a board member of both the U.S. Ski Association (USSA) and the U.S. National Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame, died

April 3 in Long Beach, Calif., after a long illness. He was 78.

Goetzman served as president of the Far West Ski Association in 1969-71, of the USSA in 1974-76, and of the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame in 1998-2004. He also was a former president of the Los Angeles Council of Ski Clubs.

"Dick was a tireless volunteer, putting in untold amounts of time to serve USSA, the Hall of Fame, and, among others, the Far West Ski Association," said Bill Marolt, president and CEO of the USSA. "I'm not sure how he made time for so much, but I'm glad he was so committed because Dick made a huge difference for so many athletes through the years."

Among the other organizations Goetzman served was ISHA. He joined the ISHA Board of Directors in 2001 shortly after the death of founder Mason Beekley. "He was a tower of strength at a time when the Association's survival was anything but certain," said John Fry, president of ISHA during that period. "He immediately saw the potential benefits of bringing ISHA closer together with the Hall of Fame. As a result, SKIING HERITAGE became the official publication of the Ski Hall of Fame."

Goetzman also served as president of the Los Angeles Council of Ski Clubs and as treasurer of the Mammoth Lakes (Calif.) Foundation, where he contributed to housing the Beekley International Collection of Skiing Art and Literature in a specially constructed museum at Mammoth Lakes. He chaired the organizing committee for ISHA's very successful 2004 Gathering at Mammoth.

He was president of Goetzman and Associates, and was named a trustee of the U.S. Ski Educational Foundation in 1968. The Far West Ski Association honored Goetzman with the Stanley Mullin Award in 1969 and the Hans Georg Award in 1986 for distinguished service. He was presented with the Julius P. Blegen Award for his longtime contributions to the USSA in 1978.—*Seth Masia*



ROBERT NORDHAUS
New Mexico Pioneer

Robert Nordhaus, 97, a member of the legendary 10th Mountain Division of World War II who went on to pioneer skiing in New Mexico's Sandia Mountains, died February 22 in Albuquerque.

Nordhaus was born in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and grew up in Albuquerque, where his father ran the Charles Ilfeld Co., the city's largest mercantile firm. He learned to ski while attending Yale and, after graduating from Yale Law School, became one of the founders of the Albuquerque Ski Club. He enlisted in the New Mexico National Guard in 1940, attended officer candidate school, and was among the first members of the 10th Mountain Division. By war's end he had attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. Following the war, he skied in Switzerland, returning to Albuquerque determined to bring lift-served skiing to New Mexico.

In 1946, Nordhaus reopened the old Santa Fe Ski Basin with two rope tows. Later, with Ben Abruzzo and Buzz Bainbridge, he founded what became Sandia Peak ski area, and built the Sandia Peak tramway.

As a lawyer, Nordhaus specialized in representing Native American nations and at one time counted 40 tribes as clients, winning important Native American water-rights and land-rights cases.

Nordhaus skied at Sandia Peak until his 90th year and remained active on its board of directors until the age of 95.—*Seth Masia*



DON METIVIER
Ski Journalist

Donald A. Metivier, 70, died April 6 in Glen Falls, New York, after a long illness.

A life-long resident of Glens Falls, Metivier joined the local paper, the *Glens Falls Post-Star*, in 1961, where he worked his way up from police reporter

to sports editor and editorial page editor, all while broadcasting on the local radio station, WWSC, as night news editor, sportscaster, and disc jockey.

His column "Along the Ski Trails" led in 1968 to a job as eastern correspondent for *Ski Racing*. In 1981 he joined the publication full time as editor and, later, publisher. He spent eight winters traveling the World Cup circuit and also covered the 1976, 1980, and 1984 Olympics. In 1988 he founded a marketing firm and represented the U.S. pro racing tour.

Metivier authored four books, including collections of his popular newspaper columns and short stories, and two local histories. He also served as president of the Eastern Ski Writers Association and of the U.S. Ski Writers Association (now the North American Ski Journalists Association).

—Seth Masia



DICK WILSON
10th Mountain Vet,
Disabled Skiing Activist
 Richard Maurice (Dick) Wilson, a veteran of the 10th Mountain Division, editor, and longtime crusader for disabled war veterans, died April 12 at his home in Grantham, New Hampshire. He was 83.

Raised in Pittsford, New York, he took up skiing in the late 1930s in the hills south of Rochester. He attended Alfred University for one year as a pre-med student before joining the 10th Mountain Division during World War II. He was wounded in Italy as his squad moved through a minefield during the advance on Mt. Belvedere and came under German mortar fire. His three-year convalescence in military hospitals led to his interest in helping other wounded soldiers regain their well-being and self-esteem.

After the war, Wilson worked in Colorado as a ski patrolman at Berthoud Pass and as a ski instructor while studying at the University of Denver. He became the first editor of *National Skiing*, precursor to *Skiing Magazine*. He served as an officer for Disabled American Veterans from 1972 until his retirement in 1986. He was active in the National Association of the 10th Mountain Division, holding positions as an officer of the Rocky Mountain, Midwest, and New England chapters. He was editor of the association's publication, *The Blizzard*, for several years, and later compiled a booklet on the contributions of 10th Mountain veterans to American skiing entitled *U.S. Skiing and the*

Men of the 10th Mountain Division: They Made It Happen.

Wilson also served on the boards of Disabled Sports/USA and the New England Ski Museum, where he assembled race teams of World War II 10th Mountain veterans that have been an annual feature of the Hannes Schneider Meister Cup at Mt. Cranmore, New Hampshire.

—Jeff Leich



JEAN SAUBERT
Ski Olympian

Two-time former Olympic medalist and six-time U.S. ski champion Jean Saubert died May 15 of cancer in Bigfork, Montana. She was 65.

Saubert, who grew up skiing in the Cascades mountain range in Oregon—where her father

was a forest ranger—saw her first Olympic Winter Games in 1960 when her parents took her to Squaw Valley, California, to see the alpine races. She raced in the next Olympics—in 1964 at Innsbruck, Austria, where she tied for the silver medal in giant slalom and won the bronze in slalom. Saubert also won six U.S. national championships in four disciplines. In 1964, she was the U.S. downhill, slalom, giant slalom, and combined champion.

After retiring from racing in the pre-World Cup era, Saubert returned to Oregon and taught school for more than 30 years. She retired from teaching to live in Salt Lake City, where she was part of the 2002 Olympic Torch Relay Team.

Bill Marolt, president and CEO of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association and a 1964 Olympic teammate of Saubert, said she was a good friend, who died too young. "Jean was a truly outstanding competitor," Marolt said. "In recent years, she was one of the most active competitors in our Return of the Champions [an alumni event including former Olympic medalists and members of the current U.S. Ski Team]," he said, calling her "a great athlete and fan, who represented all the values which USSA seeks to embody." She served on several USSA committees and was inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame in 1976.

Diagnosed with breast cancer before the 2002 Games, Saubert later moved to Bigfork to live with her sister Joan and brother-in-law.

For more on Saubert and her racing and post-racing career, see "Where Are They Now?" in the March 2003 issue of *SKIING HERITAGE*.—USSA and other sources

High-Country Heroics, Skiing As Art



Powder Pioneers

By Chic Scott

Chic Scott's lifelong drive to make the sport of skiing his life came from a sense of loss in living the urban life. "When I was young, I felt there was something wrong with the society we live in—the rush, the noise, the greed, the desire for material things.

With my friends out here on the ski trail, with the winter snow and the mysterious mountains all around, I found what I was looking for."

This led to *Powder Pioneers*, Scott's extraordinary tribute to Northwest Canadian skiing, its ski pioneering, ski exploration, early resorts, the arrival of lifts, early racing, the birth of helicopter skiing under Hans Gmoser, cross-country marathons, the Calgary Olympics, and extreme skiing in the northern Rockies. He knows his subjects well.

Scott also knows how to tell a good story, which makes this book much more interesting than simple dry history. There is his recap of the first crossing of the Rockies' greatest untamed mountain route, the 1958 Grand Traverse over the Great Divide led by Bill Briggs, a Dartmouth student (today head of the Snow King Ski School at Jackson, Wyoming) and fellow students Barry Corbet (later of Summit Films with Roger Brown), Sterling Neale, and Bob French.

Starting at the Bugaboos, the four skied across some 50 miles of largely unknown, unmapped country, emerging at Rogers Pass. The crossing of the Grand Traverse drew wide praise—the expedition had actually finished their route, which was not necessarily typical. The next attempt at a somewhat different Grand Traverse in 1960 ended after Hans Gmoser fell into a crevasse a few days out. The delay spent inching him out, added to a spell of bad weather, forced the team to quit halfway along their intended route.

One much less sane caper was the 1979 attempt to ski the

giant face of Mt. Robson—the Mt. Everest of first descents. American promoter Chuck Hammond picked Jacques Thibault, a skier of limited ability, to be the first to make the half-mile, 55-degree descent. Extreme skier Peter Chrznowski reluctantly agreed to act as back-up. Hammond commissioned four helicopters to carry the media aloft to record the event. Toni Leighton of *Ski Canada* recorded the scene as follows. "Jacques...was supercharged with adrenaline, yet unclear on his task. He knew he had to do this terrible thing, yet what lay ahead was completely unfathomable. Unfathomable and unreal."

Leighton tells how Chrznowski lowered Thibault over the top band of ice belt toward the snow face below. Thibault did not tie in. He held onto the end of the rope with one hand, his poles with the other. The guides who stood watching kept their distance, "maintaining their vow not to help a man into his grave." They looked on in horror as Chrznowski ran out of rope before Thibault could reach the snow face. "Around him were walls of blue ice that fell off into space. He held the end of the rope in one hand, his poles in the other, a bizarre sight to behold."

As one guide said, "He didn't realize how close he was to death." But Thibault finally did. He desperately kicked off his skis and scrambled upward, digging his boots into the ice as Chrznowski hauled him in. The great stunt was over. Hammond fled the

scene owing some \$45,000 for helicopter service and other trifles and was never heard from again.

Scott gives the same energy to one fine chapter after another. He succeeds in capturing the readers' rapt attention, or comes very close. This is one book that will connect to all true skiers. —Morten Lund



Hans Gmoser explores Canada's Bugaboo range.

Powder Pioneers by Chic Scott, paperback, 256 pages, black/white (some color) illustrations, Rocky Mountain Books at The Heritage Group, 406 13th St. Calgary, AB T2E 1C2, Canada, (800) 665-3302, email greatbooks@heritagehouse.ca. \$39.95 plus shipping/handling in the U.S.

Continued next page



The Art of Skiing

By Jenny de Gex

This is a book of superlative reproductions showcasing posters and photographs from the late 1800s through the 1950s and aimed at those who love the sport, love its beauty, and love its history. It all comes together in 162 pages that

display 200 illustrations from the collection of ISHA founder Mason Beekley, the world's largest, now at the Mammoth Ski Museum at Mammoth Lakes, California. The most outstanding poster artists are well represented in this book, including Dwight Shepler—his famous *Cornice Jumper* appears on page one—and the prolific Sasha Maurer.

The accompanying text is well-written, fairly accurate, and quite informative, although the author (who has written art books on a wide range of subjects) is more at home in collections of art than in ski history. This is the fourth book of its title, the first having been published by Josef Dahinden in 1928 and the second by

Charles Proctor in 1933, two of the early how-to-ski books in America. The third is by Gary Schwartz, published in 1989 and showcasing his own extensive collection of ski art.

The text and photography is a treasure trove for anyone with an interest in ski history. Just to take the first few pages, the first poster in the introduction advertises (in French) what are presumably woolen long johns (*sous-vêtements*) of the late 1800s worn by

children and their mother (hers out of sight) in the 1800s, all carrying a single pole—a shepherd's crook with a curl on the end—and two- and three-foot double-ended skis that may have signaled the first short ski movement, as yet unrecorded. The poster has, alas, no date as is frequently

the case in this book.

The facing page shows a group of monks and their dogs descending from their hospice in Great Saint-Bernard Pass from whence they famously sent out their trained rescue dogs with a brandy container on their collars (although not evident here) to give the hypothermic traveler a shot at survival. The text on the following page reports on the strong initial role of the Norwegians in creating the modern sport but claims that the first Norwegian ski club was the Christiania Ski Club in 1877, when in fact it was the Trysil Ski Club in 1861.

But this small matter pales in comparison to the book's rich sepia and black-and-white photography as exemplified in the next spread, showing the first British winter sports week in Chamonix in 1891, then a rare shot of finishers in the world's first Kandahar race at the dawn of downhill events in 1911, as well the simultaneous (*geschmizzle*) start of entrants in the British alpine championship of 1921. All of it is a marvelous view of the pioneer age of the sport and its wondrous graphic possibilities, a volume skiers or collectors of ski art will treasure for their library.—Morten Lund

The Art of Skiing by Jenny de Gex, Palazzo Publishing, 165 pages, color and black/white illustrations, Mammoth Ski Museum, Box 1815, 100 College Parkway, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546, (760) 934-6592, email tharrell@mammothlakesfoundation.org, \$45 (not including shipping and handling). *



This early poster by Franz Lenhart advertises Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, site of the 1956 Winter Olympics.



Swiss artist Alois Carigiet created this poster in 1931 to promote spring skiing at Arosa, one of the earliest resorts in the canton of Graubünden.



This poster, by an unnamed artist in the 1940s, was commissioned by the Colorado Winter Sports Committee.

Readers Respond

continued from page 5

Right Ski, Wrong Jure

As my name is mentioned in Seth Masia's article "The Evolution of Modern Ski Shapes" (September 2005), I would like to clear up a misconception.

Jure Franko—who won the silver medal in giant slalom at the Sarajevo Olympics in 1984—and I are not the same person. He is three years younger and he has never worked for the Elan SCX company. This can be confusing, just as it was in the school we attended together in 1970.

The original idea for the sidecut for the Elan SCX was mine, and Pavel Skofic made the "bending line" skistiffness-distribution calculation, since at that time only constant-width calculation was used.

To add some spice, the calculation of sidecut is very simple for an engineer: a) choose the radius of the turn, b) choose the speed at which you want to ski, c) calculate centrifugal force and lean angle (as for a bicycle, this is your angulation of the ski—do not bother with slope inclination), d) imagine the ski of constant width bent to the radius of the turn and penetrating through the snow surface,

e) "cut" the ski with the snow surface—and there you are! *Jurij Franko*
jurij.franko@email.si

Rope-Tow Remembrances

Rope-tow stories are many, but here's one about Hill 70 At Montreal's Mont Saint Sauveur.

It was New Year's Eve and a family of five from Piedmont after dark needed to reach a house just over the top of the hill. We advanced to the little shack at the bottom that housed a small Ford engine on a platform. A leather mitten broke the small window, an arm reached inside, the ignition was turned on, and four people on skis lined up. A fifth stood on the skis of the strongest skier, behind him, clutching his waist...and off they went. After midnight, they begged a lift down the hill on a sleigh, paused at the bottom, turned off the ignition, and stuffed the window with paper.

Camaraderie, booze and seduction took place most Sunday evenings. And trails of toilet paper were often part of the decoration.

The railroad played a large part in northern skiing history, and though the only part of the CPR that paid because of its passengers was the Montreal/Ste-Agathe-des-Monts run, the railroad seemed to do its best to

discourage skiers. When offices closed on Saturdays at noon, the ski train left Windsor Station at 12 o'clock and the next one didn't depart until 4 p.m. So you either cheated and left the office early, or you had a friend in a car who, while the train looped Westmount and Montreal west, would whisk you through town to Mile End.

One winter, skis weren't allowed in the passenger cars and had to be put in the baggage car, where those at the bottom of the pile were considerably damaged. That fortunately only lasted one year, until leather straps were attached to the backs of the wicker seats to hold the skis in place.

Mont Tremblant was a magic place for me, especially before Joe Ryan developed it and while Gordon Reid was still in charge of the village. It was my first trip there—the year of the first race down the mountain. We were not going to race but climbed up the mountain and were resting in a clearing surrounded by fir trees, listening to the silence. Suddenly between the trees came a dog and, close behind him—emerging from nowhere—came Herman Johannsen. It was a magic moment, and the start of a long and happy friendship.

Mrs. Anson McKim
Toronto, Ont.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Pennsylvania Winter Sports Museum inducted Olympic giant slalom gold medalist Diann Roffe (Lillehammer 1994) into its Hall of Fame on May 19 at Liberty Mountain. Roffe, long associated with the Roundtop, Liberty, and Whitetail resorts in marketing and skier development programs, was joined by six others who were honored for making major contributions to winter sports in the state: Bill Bendl, Gregg Confer, David Fowler, George Hannon, Pete Snyder, and Eliot Woodbridge. Keynote speaker was ISHA board member and longtime ski journalist John Fry.

The Vermont Ski Museum will continue its "Memory Night" program this season to gather stories and memorabilia on lost Vermont ski areas. With the help of the New England Lost Ski Areas Project (NELSAP) and local historical societies, the documentation of lost ski areas has become an ongoing project at the museum. The purpose of Mem-

ory Night is to gather old posters, photographs, films, trail signs, patches, stories, tickets and other memorabilia that will be put into a computer presentation and incorporated into the museum's current exhibit.

The New England Ski Museum opened its 2007 exhibit on the National Ski Patrol on June 1. Highlighting the origins of the NSP and its role in the creation of the 10th Mountain Division, the exhibit runs through March 2008. NSP eastern division director Rick Hamlin has taken the lead in arranging funding for a short film to be produced by Rick Moulton as part of the exhibit. Another feature is a timeline of the development of ski patrol toboggans with several sleds—including vintage models from Mt. Mansfield and Sun Valley—on display.



Martinis for Lunch

By Bill Wallace

The daily newspaper ski writer has two tremendous advantages. His avid public will read anything he writes and his boss has no idea what he is writing about. If sometimes the health is poor, the spirit lagging, and the daily essay non-qualitative, it makes not the slightest difference.

This state of affairs will continue until sports editors or newspaper publishers start to ski. There is no sign of that now. The only athletic activity known to my superior was a sprint in 1935 from the clubhouse to the daily-double window at Belmont Park, a record that stood for a few years. As for skiers, they will always read anything about their passion and often have to.

Also, the sport has a flashy quality to it, semi-romantic and with a curious appeal to the ignorant. When a cliff-dweller who has never been north of the Bronx reads about 10,000 people watching a ski jump in a 20-below blizzard, he can always chortle, "My heavens, what fools they are!," and be glad he was not there. That is good copy.

Expense accounts are a highly sensitive matter, in each case a personal entre nous between author and front office, which may realize that an inordinate sum is being spent and suggest that all skiing be done from a desk henceforth.

Covering skiing from a desk is not overly difficult. Many ski areas are quite good about publicity releases and a steady stream of data comes by mail. Frank Elkins of the New York Times once told me he thought he could write skiing from

his desk indefinitely, but he certainly did not want to. No one does.

While speaking of sensitive money matters, freeloaded comes to mind. People tell me this is not bribery but courtesy, a polite explanation. It has become an accepted habit in many locations, like tipping. But there is a visible danger and one should be well aware of the hand that gives. If the spirit behind the freeloader is courtesy—"Thanks for coming up all this way to visit us, old chap, it has been a pleasure to have you as our guest"—then all is well. But if it is otherwise—"Now

I've got that bum. I own a piece of him and he better write about my joint or next time I'll put the blast on him"—then look out.

The spirit of the generous host is everywhere in skiing and some ski writers do quite well by it. If recognition is ever given for ski writing, I think two awards should be given

annually. One should be given to the person who has done the most for skiing, the other to the one who has done skiing for the most.

Because it is a colorful and diverse sport, skiing offers an inexhaustible source of subject matter, thank goodness.

If all this sounds too wonderful for words, don't quit your job. There are no openings here at present.



Bill Wallace wrote about skiing for the old New York World Telegram. He later worked in the sports department of the New York Times. This article is an adaptation of the original from the November 1952 issue of Ski Magazine.



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